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STUDY OF A STORM: AN ANALYSIS OF ZAPATISTA PROPAGANDA

by

Angela Maria Giordano

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Thesis Advisor: Gordon McCormick
Thesis Co-Advisor: Roman Laba

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The beginning hours of 1994 rang in both the New Year and the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas. Although in existence since 1983, the Zapatista movement was relatively unknown to the rest of the world until *Subcomandante* Marcos' propaganda offensive against the Mexican government. Steeped in historical references to indigenous exploitation and Emiliano Zapata, the Zapatista's call to arms and governmental reformation has continued to make effective use of symbols and rituals, reshaping the images of Indianness and economic suffering within Chiapas. The organization continues to garner support abroad as well as within Mexico through the use of the Internet, public media and effective appropriation of nationalist symbols. What marks the Zapatista rebellion as extraordinary is its emergence as one of the first information age insurgencies to make such efficient use of these mediums.

This study presents a framework for analyzing propaganda, drawing from the fields of symbolic politics, cultural anthropology, and marketing. This symbolic frame is then applied to the Zapatistas in order to better understand the entire movement. The propaganda goals of the organization are examined, specifically addressing the areas of legitimacy, member unification, support both outside and within Mexico, recruitment, and challenges presented to the government.

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STUDY OF A STORM: AN ANALYSIS OF ZAPATISTA PROPAGANDA

Angela Maria Giordano
Captain, United States Army
B.S., United States Military Academy, 1987

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A. CONTEXT

At precisely thirty minutes into the New Year of 1994 an army of young and mostly indigenous[1] men and women uniformed in rubber boots, camouflaged pants, red bandanas, and ski masks, seized town halls in seven municipalities in eastern and central Chiapas. Poorly armed with a motley array of weapons ranging from UZIs and AK-15s to sledgehammers and axes (many even had wooden rifles), they declared war on the military and the government. On this day, the inauguration of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Zapatistas declared "¡*Hoy decimos basta*!" ["Today we say enough is enough!"][2] and, invoking Article 39 of Mexico's 1917 Constitution which invests national sovereignty and the right to change the government in the people, called on their "Mexican brothers" to help depose the "illegal dictatorship" of President Salinas de Gortari. The spokesman and military strategist for the Zapatistas, *Subcomandante* Marcos, was quite clear about the demands of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN). Beginning on the second day of the uprising, they held press

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[1] The terms "Indian" and "indigenous" are used interchangeably when referring to those people and communities defined by the United Nations Sub-Commissioin on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities as follows: "Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop, and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their own continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own culturall patterns, social institutions and legal systems." From *Study of the Problem of Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations,* United Nations Document E/Cn.4/Sub.2/1986/7Add.4, para.379, 1968, as cited in Donna Lee Van Cott, *Defiant Again: Indigenous Peoples and Latin American Security, McNair Paper,* no.53, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, October 1996.

[2] For full text translated into English of their *Declaración de la Selva Lacondona* ("Declaration from the Lacondona Jungle") see *Shadows of Tender Fury: The Letters and Communiques of Subcomandante*

conferences and emphasized agrarian reform as central to their list of demands: work, land, housing, nutrition, health, education, independence, freedom, democracy, and justice, as well as their "Laws of Women".[3]

Twelve days later, more than 100,000 citizens marched into the city square of Mexico City chanting, "*Primer Mundo, ¡Já Já Já!* ["First World, Ha Ha Ha!"] in open defiance of the government's economic alliances with "developed" countries to the North and claim that Mexico was on the way to becoming a First World country. Bowing to this pressure, Salinas ordered his military to a cease-fire and sent a representative to negotiate with the EZLN, assisted by a Zapatista-approved mediator, Bishop Samuel Ruiz García. One Mexican writer quips, "the Zapatistas achieved in eleven days what the FMLN [Farabundo Martín National Liberation Front, a former guerrilla organization in El Salvador] was unable to in eleven years." In other words, he continues, they were able

> ...to determine the terms of the cease-fire, to force the government to sit and negotiate in their own territory, to introduce into the spectrum of Mexican political forces a new vision of the future of the country, and above all, to create a new political mythology in a time when most political mythologies are bankrupt.[4]

The Zapatista's influence did not stop here. The July 1997 mid-term congressional elections in Mexico resulted in the first major break in nearly 70 years of control by the Institutional Ruling Party (PRI). Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas of the leftist opposition Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) won the mayoral elections in Mexico City, while the PRD, the National Action Party (PAN), and two smaller parties

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Marcos and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation by Marcos, Leslie Lopez (translator), Frank Bardacke, and Joh Ross, Monthly Review Press, 1995.

[3] In general, these laws included the following rights and demands: no arranged marriages(without their consent), availability of birth control, participation in the life of the community (to include holding political office), and right to study. For full text, see "Revolutionary Women's Law" in Elaine Katzenberger, ed., *First World, Ha Ha Ha!: The Zapatista Challenge,* City Lights, 1995, pp.109-110.

gained an 11-vote majority in the 500-member Chamber of Deputies.[5] The Zapatista spokesperson, Marcos, however, urged the Zapatistas to shun the voting because none of the mainstream parties offered viable solutions to the country's problems.[6] The unprecedented political pluralism, nevertheless, was no doubt a result of the increased societal awareness and refusal to accept the status quo, in part brought about by the Zapatista movement. In effect, the citizens of Mexico joined together and cried ¡Basta! as each cast his vote against business as usual in Mexican politics.

Steeped in historical references to indigenous exploitation and Emiliano Zapata's[7] Mexican Revolution of the 1910s, the Zapatista's call to arms and governmental reformation succeeded in not only mobilizing the peoples of Chiapas, but also uniting various activist groups outside the country, most of whom had no direct contact or knowledge of the Chiapas Indian movement prior to January 1994. The Zapatistas, with *Subcomandante* Marcos orchestrating, became masters of symbols, linking the past to the present and the present to the future, through carefully managed use of the Internet and public media. Their campaign achieved several notable results. They were able to (1)

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[4] Guillermo Gómez Peña, "The Subcomandante of Performance," in Katzenberger, pp.95-6.

[5] Ricarado Sandoval, "Opposition Wins Big in Mexico, Victory: Cárdenas Captures Powerful Post in Capital City," *San Jose Mercury News*, 7 July 1997, p.1A, and "Outcomes Still Shifting from Mexico's July 6 Vote," *CNN Interactive*, [http://cnn.com/ WORLD/americas/9708/06/RB001281.reut.html], 6 August 1997.

[6] Additionally, Zapatistas and their supporters were credited with burning voting materials and destroying polling stations, shutting down 84 polling booths in Chiapas. See Ricardo Sandoval, "Opposition Wins Big in Mexico Victory: Cárdenas Captures Powerful Post in Capital City," *San Jose Mercury News*, 7 July 1997, p.1A.

[7] Zapata was himself a Zapoteca Indian tenant farmer from the state of Morelos, to the west of Mexico City, who gathered up an army of Indians in the 1910-1917 Mexican Revolution and led them in an effort to regain expropriated Indian lands. He controlled large parts of southern Mexico and his Liberator Army of the South occupied Mexico City three times in 1914-15, entering the first time in November 1914 with the forces of Pancho Villa. After the revolution, he retired to Morelos and died after he was invited to lunch with a former rival colonel and then shot dead. His murder is considered to be among the most treacherous deeds in Mexican history. For more detail, see Ward Churchill, "A North American Indigenist View," in Katzenberger, pp.141-155.

legitimize their organization and cause, (2) unify the seemingly diverse (in terms of religion and race), (3) garner support from outside their country and culture as well as (4) from Mexicans outside Chiapas, (5) recruit members, and (6) challenge the existing power structure in Mexico.

B. SYMBOLS AND STRUGGLES

Although the question remains cloudy of whether the EZLN is a social movement, a revolutionary socialist movement, or an Indian movement, one fact that is clear is the phenomena of international support and sympathy. Three years later the Zapatistas are still regarded as an organization with which to be reckoned. Their campaign has directly influenced actions taken towards land reform by the Mexican government as well as indirectly pressured other governments to address the Zapatista grievances. RAND analyst David Ronfeldt observes that their struggle has indeed been partially successful.

> It helped oblige President Salinas in January 1994, and President Zedillo in February 1995, to halt current military operations and turn to political negotiations. It has added to the pressures on Mexico's leaders to continue enacting political and electoral reforms, and to take human rights seriously.[8]

To gain a better understanding of the Zapatista phenomenon, it is necessary to reframe the rebellion and approach it from a different perspective. Attempts at symbolic mobilization accompany every modern movement, "from the donning of simple military tunics by the Russian and Chinese Communists, to the pagan glitter of the Fascist

[8] David Ronfeldt, "The Battle for the Mind of Mexico," an email copy from author of the original version in English of an article published in Spanish in Mexico, "Batallas Mexicanas en Internet," *NEXOS*, December 1995, pp.47-52.

hierarchs, to...the scruffy beards of Latin American *guerrilleros*."[9] Cultural symbols are powerful tools to reach target audiences and, consequently, movement leaders frame their collective actions around them, creating new meanings and connotations from the old while wrapping them in social and political context.

The proper selection of particular symbols and themes is critical, however. Symbols are not just reproduced unconsciously or unselectively, but require some action and an infusion of new materials and meaning if they are to mobilize. As "consumers of existing cultural meanings as well as producers of new ones,"[10] they must focus on the "intersection between a target population's culture and their own values and goals."[11] In this way inherited symbols of a culture can be appropriated to fit the needs of the rebellion, combined with new symbols that effectively reach the target audiences.

Using this concept of a symbolic frame to analyze the Zapatistas, it becomes apparent that their success was largely due to their ability to appropriate nationalist symbols as well as reshape the images of Indianness and economic suffering within Chiapas (as compared to the rest of Mexico). Groups both outside Mexico as well as non-Chiapas Mexicans could identify equally well with these new images, which emphasized international indigenous oppression, women's rights, and Mexican nationalism, focusing on Emiliano Zapata's fight for indigenous land rights as well as the indigenous heritage of almost all Mexicans today. Using symbols that evoked such images, with particular attention to liberal activist groups the world over, the Zapatistas

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[9] Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics,* Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.118.
[10] Ibid., p.123.
[11] Ibid.

disseminated their images and messages globally, using World Wide Web pages on the Internet, news media, and electronic newsgroups.

C. METHODOLOGY

Primary to their success, the Zapatista's have been able to successfully select and incorporate symbols which appeal to outside groups. By appealing to the non-indigenous Mexicans and to the international community, the Zapatistas have been able to rouse both domestic and international support. By selecting those symbols which addressed vulnerabilities or susceptibilities within each group, the Zapatistas were able to reach out using these symbols and create a means for the target audiences to identify with and support their own cause. At the same time, they were able to minimize the reach and legitimacy of their adversaries' symbols.

This thesis will analyze the Zapatista rebellion using a symbolic frame. The particular symbols and rituals used by the Zapatista to foment both domestic and international support will be examined to determine how they are able to garner support for their cause. Although emphasis will be placed on the early period of the uprising (January through July of 1994), their campaign up to 1997 will also be addressed. The basic principles of such disciplines as symbolic politics, political psychology, cultural anthropology, and even marketing all contribute to this symbolic frame, which the Zapatistas skillfully employed. Their efforts brought them a semblance of legitimacy, a strongly united organization, support both outside and inside Mexico, aided in recruitment, and presented a challenge to the government.

D. SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

One of the first images presented by the Zapatistas appeared on the Internet in 1992. In the essay, entitled "Chiapas: the Southwest in Two Winds," Marcos describes the problems of the Chiapas region and its exploitation by the government using the images of winds to illustrate the impending clash of the people and those exploiting them. This image of the Zapatista storm is used in this thesis to outline the development of the Zapatista's propaganda campaign and their clash of symbols.

The study of the storm begins with an introductory chapter that provides critical background and context. Chapter II, The Winds of Change, follows with a brief discussion of the origins of the current Zapatista movement, focusing on the economic and social conditions in Chiapas leading up to the rebellion.

Chapter III, The Storm Brews, discusses symbols and rituals as used in rebellions and insurgencies, in order to build a bridge between symbols and underground movements. This bridge will then provide the framework for analyzing movements such as the Zapatista uprising. Chapter IV, The Clouds Form, looks at how the economic and social situation in Chiapas helped create susceptible groups that were vulnerable to the Zapatistas. Other target audiences, their vulnerabilities, and the means of disseminating the Zapatista's images and symbols are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter V, The Sky Darkens, discusses in much greater detail the symbols of the Zapatista uprising. Both the Mayan roots and culture are reflected in many facets of the organization, as well as the Mexican Revolution of 1910. How these symbols achieve their ends (e.g., legitimacy) is analyzed, using the framework outlined in Chapter II.

The last chapter, The Rain Falls, presents the final analysis, as well as discusses its applicability to other insurgent movements. Although many have described the Zapatistas as the first modern insurgents (owing to their sophisticated use of the Internet and public media), it is most assuredly not the last.

II. SEEDS OF CHANGE

A. GRIEVANCES

In his August 1992 essay, "Chiapas: the Southeast in Two Winds," Marcos alludes to the conflict between the natural resource rich state and the marginalized groups of people who live there.

> The storm is here. From the clash of these two
> Winds the storm will be born, its time has
> Arrived. Now the wind from above rules, but the
> Wind from below is coming....[12]

In order to understand the Zapatista rebellion, it is necessary to understand the origins of the Zapatista's "storm," or, as one commentator phrased it, the Zapatista "moment" in a social struggle of several decades in Mexico.[13] As a result of these grievances, a situation arose that was ripe for rebellion, a situation that the Zapatistas were able to effectively exploit.

Central to any successful insurgency is a popular support base and legitimate grievances against the existing regime. There is evidence that those affiliated with the organization do indeed have legitimate grievances against the Mexican government, which in turn facilitated the growth of their popular support. A map depicting Chiapas as well as the areas of greatest Zapatista support is shown in Figure 1.

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[12] Subcomandante Marcos, "Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds," [http://www.ezln.org/SE-in-two-winds.html], 2 March 1997.
[13] Carlos Montemayor, "Mexico: EZLN and EPR Reviewed Separately," FBIS-LAT-97-203, 28 June 1997.

Figure 1. Chiapas and the Areas of Zapatista Rebellion. From Collier, 3.

Stanford University anthropologist George Collier provides one of the most complete analyses of the land reform issues and societal impacts of the changing economy in Chiapas. This region, the natural resource center of Mexico, provides over half of the hydroelectricity, 21 percent of the oil, 47 percent of the natural gas, and a third of its coffee production (of which 68 percent is exported).[14] Despite this wealth of resources, however, there is 25 percent illiteracy in the relatively privileged town of San Cristóbal and 71 percent illiteracy in the largely indigenous town of Chamula.[15] Thirty percent of the region's population of 3.2 million is illiterate and half live without running water or electricity. Alcoholism is rampant, as are parasitic diseases among children.[16] In Collier's words, Chiapas has become "almost an internal colony for the rest of Mexico."[17] Figures 2 and 3 illustrate this disparity.

B. CHANGING ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

The economy of Chiapas and the changes brought about by the changing global market, particularly the oil boom and bust, played a critical role. Prior to Mexico's 1982 debt crisis, there existed a mixed economy of timber, corn, coffee, and cattle. These all suffered under the eventual removal of fertilizer subsidies, a 50% fall in world coffee prices, drop in domestic price of corn, and the devaluation of the peso in 1976 and 1977. As a result, peasants in the region lost their land, cattle, and other collateral to foreclosures when they failed to make good on their loans taken out to finance their

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[14] Philip L. Russell, *The Chiapas Rebellion,* Mexico Resource Center, 1995, p.12.
[15] Ibid., p.18.
[16] George A. Collier and Elizabeth Lowery Quaratiello, *Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas,* The Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1994, p.16. For a good description of living conditions in Chiapas, see Paulina Hemosillo and Hortensia Sierra, "Testimonies," in Katzenberger, pp.35-40.
[17] Ibid., p.19.

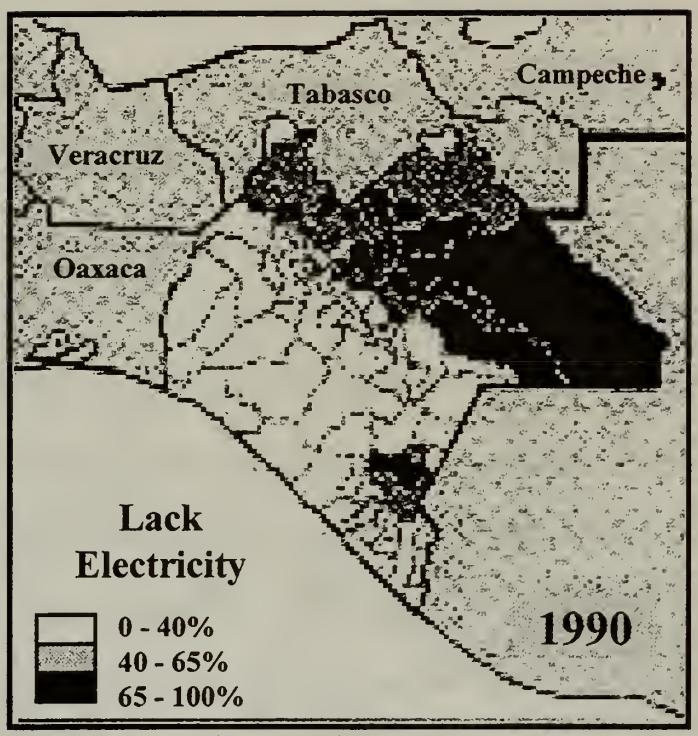

Figure 2. Distribution of electricity among southern Mexican states. From Collier and Quaratiello, 17.

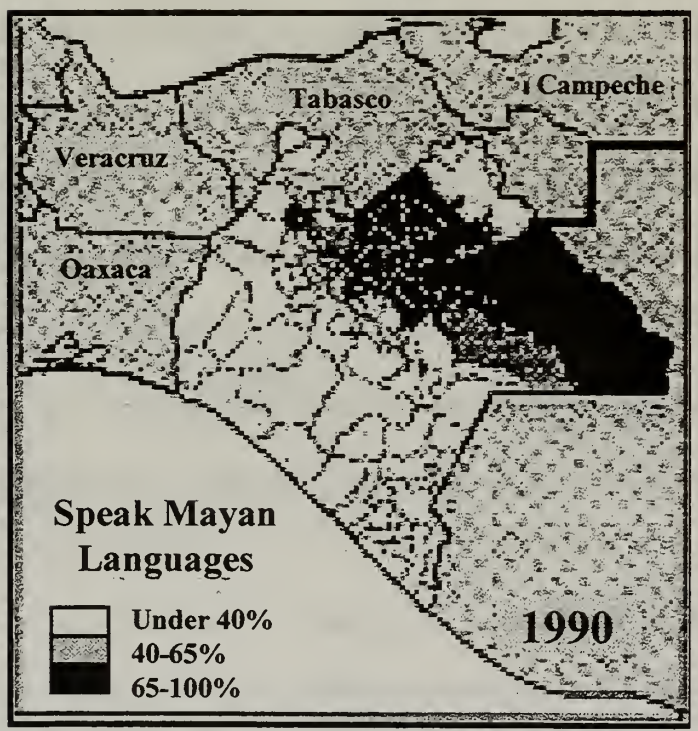

Figure 3. Distribution of Mayan-speaking people among southern Mexican states. From Collier and Quaratiello, 17.

farms.[18] Additionally, much of the land formerly rented to peasants had been converted to grasslands for cattle (which only requires one percent as many people per hectare as farming).[19] Their labor requirements for the remaining fields were also significantly decreased due to their access to chemicals such as pesticides and fertilizers, meaning less work available for those most needing it.

As a result of these economic changes, a gap arose and widened between the rich and poor, not only between the *ladino* and *indígena*[20] but also among the indigenous people themselves. "Although all appear to be poor to the outside observer, there are in fact townspeople who are wealthy by local standards, who have hitched their fate to the dominant political party, and who thus have much to lose in an uprising which surely is at least in part against *them*."[21]

Additionally, differences arose due to religious faith. Of the approximately 30,000 Chamulas, 90 percent are evangelical Protestants, due to the efforts of the US missionaries in the area, according to the Rutherford Institute, an international civil and religious liberties organization based in Charlottesville, Virginia. The only common trait among these newly created subcultures within a culture was their search for identity.

The situation only worsened as Salinas forced "the reform" of Article 27 of the Constitution through Congress in 1992 at the urging of his advisors. Because they felt that the productivity of peasant-held land used for crops was not competitive, they pushed

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[18] Collier and Quaratiello, Chapters IV and V, and Russell, Chapter 1.
[19] Russell, p.13.
[20] *Ladino* is a term that refers to *mestizos* (of mixed white and Indian parentage), people of purely European descent, and genetic Indians who have chosen to "shed the cultural markers of being 'Indian'...who speak Spanish instead of Nahuatl, wear shoes instead of sandals, call themselves Matos instead of Moctezuma, move from their communal village to the capital city." *Indígena*, on the other hand, are genetic Indians who maintain all their traditional customs and language. From Peter Winn, *Americas: The Changing Face of Latin America and the Caribbean*, University of California Press, 1995, pp.241-242.

for the total elimination of market subsidies and the halt of all further land reform (initially begun under the 1917 Constitution) in order to prevent additional land from being absorbed into inefficient peasant production.[22] They advocated privatization and commercialization of peasant and Indian-held parcels, devastating to the already destitute peasant and *indígena*, now further stripped of any potential to earn a livelihood or support his family. This "effectively dashed the hopes of landless peasants of ever owning their own small farm."[23]

Finally, the specter of NAFTA weighed heavily on the region's farmers, particularly corn growers, who feared that they would be overwhelmed by food imports from the United States, depriving them their livelihoods,. Eduardo Pesquiera, Mexico's representative to the Food and Agricultural Organization remarked, "In Mexico, corn is more than a food. It is culture, religion, and national identity."[24] It was no accident that the New Year uprising took place on the inauguration of this trade agreement. In his first communiqué, Marcos announced that NAFTA was "a death certificate for the indigenous peoples of Mexico."[25]

But NAFTA was not the only "death certificate." The Indian communities were traditionally close-knit, of one principal religion (an indigenous and Catholic hybrid), and revolved around communal lands called *ejidos*. Their primary loyalty was to their community and they most closely identified with their Mayan heritage. Loyalties and class, however, were no longer defined along the lines of ethnicity after the introduction

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[21] Rosset, in Katzenberger, p.164.
[22] Ibid., pp.85-86.
[23] Rosset, in Katzenberger, p.164.
[24] Russell, p.17.
[25] Gary MacEoin, *The People's Church: Bishop Samuel Ruiz of Mexico and Why He Matters,* The Crossroads Publishing Company, 1996, p.94.

of government Indianist programs,[26] a rising economic gap among Indians, and the proliferation of evangelical and Catholic Liberation Theology converts. In effect, the traditional social and economic structures of the region had, in many areas, completely broken down, leaving a vacuum among the various groups.

The result was a situation which "contributed to the defection into the Zapatista camp...In eastern Chiapas, which has no major commercial centers and is largely inaccessible even by road, the impoverished have had no place to turn and little to lose by joining the Zapatista rebellion."[27] Rossett contends that "the roots of the struggle do indeed spring from the history of marginalization and racism to which the Maya Indians have been subject, but their Declaration of War and other statements clearly reach out to the poor of all ethnic groups across the length and breadth of greater Mexico."[28] The Zapatista movement in this way was able to capitalize on the fragmented groups within the region, all persecuted or having some vulnerability, which in turn made it easy to accept the single Zapatista image of the world. The conditions were ripe for rebellion, and the mobilization of these disenfranchised groups was not difficult. For a history of the EZLN itself, refer to Appendix A.

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[26] Collier and Quaratiello, p.36.
[27] Ibid., p.106.
[28] Ibid.

III. THE WINDS OF CHANGE

A. IMAGE

The environment in which an individual lives has a significant impact on the way he perceives the world and, logically following this, it also affects the way he behaves. Moreover, humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings that these things hold for them, and this meaning is derived from or arises out of the social interaction that they have with others. Based on these meanings and an individual's environment, an image of the world is created. The Zapatistas have fashioned their image of the world and perpetrate it using symbols. Their social interaction has been actualized through the press, the Internet, and their contact with outside groups in other forums (such as Indigenous Conferences). Before delving into the role of image, however, it is necessary to have a brief synopsis of this concept.

Kenneth Boulding calls this image of the world "knowledge", what one believes to be true. His "Organic Theory of Knowledge" has three basic components: (1) knowledge is what somebody knows; (2) without a knower, knowledge is an absurdity (think of the tree falling in the woods); and (3) growth of knowledge is the growth of an "organic" structure. The first proposition of his theory is that behavior depends on the image, which in turn is built up as a result of all past experiences of the image itself. All of these aspects make up a person's subjective knowledge structure which itself is subjective and, thus, can be manipulated through the use of symbols, since it is through symbols and their meanings that an image is conceived.

Boulding's theory addresses the image as both "private" and "public". We share and have a belief that this image of the world is shared by other people like ourselves who also are part of our image of the world. The basic bond of any society, culture, subculture, or organization is a "public" image, that is, "an image the essential characteristics of which are shared by the individuals participating in the group."[29] There is, however, a relationship between these two images, as there is a "strange dynamic instability arising out of the fact that persons themselves are to a considerable extent what their images make them. Because the image is a creation of the message, people tend to remake themselves in the image which other people have of them."[30] Moreover, this "remaking" is apparent in another variant with regard to a subculture (group of people sharing a "public" image).

> If...there are basic similarities in the images of the different individuals in the group, the behavior of the group will reflect and will, in general, reinforce the similarities. This is because the symbolic messages which are issued from individuals in the group reflect in some degree the image which they possess, and these messages when received by other individuals in the group *confirm the image* which is held by the recipient.[31]

Thus, we can see the importance of group culture and the role of images not only in remaking the group image, but also on the individual images members have of themselves as well as of the group, powerful enough to override their own individual images of the world. Moreover, these images affect and influence the resultant behavior of the group. Knowledge, then, is relative and meaning is a product of both "private" and

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[29] Kenneth E. Boulding, *The Image*, University of Michigan Press, p.64.
[30] Ibid., p.71.
[31] Boulding mentions a famous experiment in which all but one in a group are told to lie to the single member who is unaware of the ruse about the length of lines in a drawing. In a large number of instances the single member was persuaded to "disbelieve his senses by the symbolic messages of his peers." Ibid., pp.132-3.

"public" image, neither of which is absolute or permanent. A group made up of relatively dissimilar individuals (such as appears to be the case within the Zapatistas, made up of Protestants, Catholic Liberation Theologists, *mestizo* peasants, and landless Indians), can thus be unified if their group image and their resultant actions and behaviors share some similarities.

B. SYMBOLS, RITUAL AND MYTH

These actions and behaviors are often manifested in ritual and myth. The social order of any society can be better understood through an examination of the societal rituals, myths, and symbols. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, a symbol is "something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention, especially a material object used to represent something invisible.[32] Building on this definition, ritual, as defined by Kertzer, is a "symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive,...action wrapped in a web of symbolism."[33]

Rituals are designed also to influence natural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests.[34] Focusing on the importance of ritual in unifying groups, rituals also "function[s] to draw all people together to emphasize their similarities and common heritage; to minimize their differences, and to contribute to their thinking, feeling, and acting alike."[35] Examples of rituals include written constitutions and other documents, worship and initiation rites in non-literate societies, and stories of common descent from a founding ancestor. In essence, "we are what we do, not what we think."[36]

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[32] Excerpted from *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition,* Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996, electronic version from Microsoft Bookshelf 98.
[33] David I.Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power*, Yale University Press, 1988, p.9.
[34] Victor W. Turner, "Symbols in African Ritual," *Science,* v.179, 16 March 1972, pp.183.
[35] W. Lloyd Warner, *American Life: Dream and Reality,* University of Chicago Press, 1962, p.7.
[36] Kertzer, p.68.

Societies need ritual. They are inherent to giving purpose and identity to groups, and are critical to creating an understandable image of the world and giving meaning to everyday life. Kertzer adds that

> Ritual fulfills important organizational needs, it helps provide legitimacy at the same time as it mystifies actual power relations, it facilitates popular solidarity, even where consensus is conspicuously absent, and it leads people to conceive of their political universe in certain ways.[37]

From this point of view it is easy to see that participation in elections is not simply the exercise of a political choice, but also is participation in a ritual act. As in all rituals, whether in primitive or modern societies, they serve to draw attention to common social ties and to the importance and apparent reasonableness of accepting the public policies that are adopted; only in a minor degree is it participation in policy formation.[38] In this way, voting becomes a symbolic affirmation of the voters' acceptance of the political system and their role within it. The ritual of casting their vote becomes important because it turns the voters' attention to a particular model of 'politics,' of the nature of political conflict and the possibilities of political change. Moreover, "it results from and reinforces the belief, in which there is normally little truth, that elections give them an influence over government policy."[39]

Similarly, mythology, according to Edelman, is the "belief held in common by a large group of people that gives events and actions a particular meaning; it is typically socially cued rather than empirically based."[40] By examining the mythology of a people, it is easier to understand the social image of the group, the image that they hold to be

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[37] Ibid., p.153.
[38] Ibid., p.3.
[39] Steven Lukes, *Essays in Social Theory*, Columbia University Press, 1977, p.72.
[40] Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, University of Chicago Press, 1988, p.1.

true, and the values that they hold highest. Although this thesis will not devote a large amount of space to this particular aspect of society, it is important to note its role in developing and perpetrating an image, as well as for understanding those symbols and myths which have been appropriated by a particular organization.

> As time passes, events of import to a people, redolent with detail, retain only the skeleton of their significance or, having lost much of their previous content, these events become vehicles for new significations. At the same time, such events embody contemporary meanings, legitimized by an implicit reference to a historic past; simultaneously, they (event-meaning) legitimate the past by exemplifying its continuity in the present.[41]

This idea is clearly seen in the case of the Zapatistas. They have, as will be shown, effectively used historical myths as vehicles for new meanings. Their use of both Mexican and Mayan myths, coupled with newly created rituals, has infused new significance to the old figures, and by linking to these historical myths and legends, has also added a legitimacy to their insurgent group.

C. ROLE OF CULTURE

The role of culture is just as critical to understanding how perceptions are interpreted, how images are created, and why symbols, rituals, and myths take on particular meanings. "Perceptions and misperceptions about political threats and issues are crucial in political behavior,"[42] and the manipulation of these perceptions through the careful use of symbols can potentially modify and influence a group's behavior and image of another group, institution, or other entity.

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[41] Janet L. Dolgin and JoAnn Magdoff, "The Invisible Event," in Janet L. Dolgin and JoAnn Magdoff, eds., *Symbolic Anthropology: A Reader in the Study of Symbols and Meaning*, Columbia University Press, 1977, pp.351-2.

[42] Edelman, p.1.

As Berkley showed[43], an individual's physical state plays a significant part in determining how one perceives reality. In other words, environment and social interaction with others affect people's perceptions and thus their image of the world. In addition to and related to these factors is that of culture, defined simply as a "shared way of life of a group of people."[44] Because the environments and values of different cultures varies, their languages and linguistic systems also differ, affecting the manner in which they perceive, interpret symbols, and develop their images of the world.

The definitions of "in-group" and "out-group" are likewise affected by culture. In-group definitions and the guidelines of behavior toward persons included in these groups vary across cultures[45], which in turn affect the selection of symbols and meanings as they apply to various groups and subgroups within or without a particular culture, group or organization.

D. IMAGES FOR INSURGENCY

The use of symbols, ritual, and myth are thus central to the creation of an image. Persuasion and popular support, both necessary aspects of insurgency, in turn are affected by this image. Persuasion, simply put, is the art of perceiving weak spots in the images of others and of prying them apart with well-constructed symbolic messages. Similarly,

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[43] To reconstruct his famous experiment, place one hand in the hot water and the other hand in the cold water. Keep them there for about three minutes, then plunge both hands at the same time into the third basin of lukewarm water. From Marshall H. Segall, et al., *Human Behavior in Global Perspective: An Introduction to Cross-Cultural Psychology,* Pergamon Press, 1990, p.69.

[44] Ibid., p.44.

[45] One group of researchers discovered that these definitions differ from culture to culture. They found that Greeks defined the in-group as more personal in character than an American one, including in their definition family members, friends, and even foreign tourists, but not persons one doesn't know, even if they happen to be Greek. Americans, on the other hand, do not typically consider foreign tourists part of the in-group; but all Americans, even those unknown personally, are usually included. From H. C. Triandis, et. al., "Three Cross-Cultural Studies of Subjective Culture," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology Monographs,* v.8, 1968, as quoted in Segall et. al., Human Behavior in Global Perspective, p.338.

popular support relies on image, since the crafting of a favorable image in key to gaining such support. Mao Tse-tung concluded, "Because guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation."[46] Image thus becomes the basic premise of all propaganda, and its use by the Zapatistas is no exception. Several factors that influence image will now discussed, focusing on their impacts on insurgent organizations.

1. Symbols

In order to perpetrate and create an image, the organization needs symbols. The process of using symbols to create a desired image can be described as the pursuit of social power, defined by Boulding as "the capacity to make people identify with some organization to which they give loyalty."[47] More specifically, however, when a "movement organization chooses symbols with which to frame its message, it sets a strategic course between its cultural setting, its political opponents and the militants and ordinary citizens whose support it needs."[48] Thus, the selection and use of these cultural symbols is not just chance, but requires synthesis and action in order to imbue the symbols with meaning favorable to the organization.

2. Appropriation of Symbols

Although meanings of symbols are not universal, their meanings can be "appropriated", in a sense, and used for a group's own purposes. The appropriation of

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[46] As quoted in Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change,* Stanford University Press, 1994, p.147.
[47] Kenneth Boulding, *Three Faces of Power,* SAGE Publications, Inc., 1989, p31.
[48] Tarrow, p.123.

symbols[49] is basically the "ability to use the symbols of the dominators for alternative purposes; the ability to use the very imagery of political legitimacy to expose the illegitimacy of those in power."[50] The appropriation of such symbols is a response to the "ideological hegemony"[51] described by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, in that

> The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that...the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of dominance.[52]

Scott concludes that appropriation of symbols was not just a struggle between rich and poor in his Malayan village over work, property rights, grain, and cash. Instead, it was over who to "identify causes and assess blame, a contentious effort to give partisan meaning to local history,"[53] much as is seen today in the Zapatistas movement.

3. Garnering of Support

Besides creating an overall image favorable to the goals of the organization, the manipulation of symbols can also be used to generate support, both external and internal. According to J. Bowyer Bell, "the insurgent faithful often refuse to believe that the 'truth is not apparent beyond their own group," and notes that

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[49] Scott discusses this concept while observing a Malayan village for a study, in which he analyzes social interactions among the villagers. Earle also applies this concept to the case of the Zapatistas. See discussions in James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance,* Yale University Press, 1985 as well as Duncan Earle, "Indigenous Identity at the Margin: Zapatismo and Nationalism," *Cultural Survival Quarterly,* v.18, no.1, Spring 1994, pp.26-30.

[50] Earle, p.27.

[51] Antonio Gramsci, noted Italian militant and socialist scholar who influenced many Marxist scholars, first used this term. He used this to describe the process of ideological domination, used in its symbolic or idealist sense. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks,* ed. and trans. by Quinten Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Lawrence and Wishart, 1971. Quoted from Scott, p.315.

[52] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology,* Lawrence and Wishart, 1965, p.61.

[53] Scott, p.xvii.

> Guerrilla texts often insist that the word is more important than the war, in reality, the war is the word made manifest. This must be explained, elaborated, and reinforced, especially among the true believers who do not carry guns...insurgent movements always recognize the need to disseminate the 'truth' as rapidly and broadly as possible.[54]

Symbols, however, must have meaning or relevance "to everyday lives, frustrations, and successes"[55] or else they become meaningless or impotent. They are like the "reactions of spectators in a museum to the icons of a culture with which they feel no empathy," or the yawn of an affluent person in response to the term "unemployment" contrasted with the constant fear of a worker vulnerable to layoff.[56]

4. Vulnerability of Groups

The alienated, disenfranchised, or marginalized groups become central in any discussion of rebellions and insurgent movements, for it is these very groups that are most vulnerable or susceptible to change, in whatever form is most applicable or accessible to their situations. It is also these same groups that are usually not included in any exchange of opposing views on important issues. David Kertzer notes that

> Lacking the formal organization and the material resources that help perpetrate the rule of the elite, the politically deprived need a means of defining a new collectivity. This collectivity, created through ritual and symbols, not only provides people with an identity different from that encouraged by the elite, but also serves as a means to recruit others to their side. An insurgent force that lacks its own distinctive symbolism and rites is not likely to get very far.[57]

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[54] J. Bowyer Bell, "Aspects of the Dragonworld: Covert Communications and the Rebel Ecosystem," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence,* v.3, no.1, pp.33-5.
[55] Edelman, p.8.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Kertzer, p.181.

5. Language and The Power of Ambiguity

The manipulation of appropriated symbols and exploitation of vulnerabilities can contribute to the alignment with an ideology or image, which in turn can be used to reach a goal or garner support for a particular group. Max Lerner stated on the eve of the second World War that "while a dictator's power stems from symbols they manipulate, the symbols in turn depend upon the entire range of associations that they invoke."[58] He continued that "the power of these symbols in enormous. Men possess thoughts, but symbols possess men."[59] In fact, the term "leadership" (like the terms "problem" and "enemy") is itself a political weapon. "It catalyzes an intricate language game that draws its appeal from a complex of psychological needs including an incentive to blame or praise identifiable people for changes in well-being and an effort to understand why changes take place."[60]

In terms of the appeals of leaders and the language they use, the favored strategy is ambiguity. This strategy "avoids offending those who might find a clear promise offensive, encourages everyone to read their own preferences into the language, and at the same time permits speakers to emphasize their difference from rivals by relying on stylistic idiosyncrasies."[61] Taking this further, the use of ambiguous symbols can unify heterogeneous groups, giving a common identity to those groups of mixed subcultures. According to Martin Silvermon, "it is possible to maintain identities which may be potential conflict by isolating a symbolic form to a particular practice, or making the

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[58] In *Ideas for the Ice Age,* Viking Press, 1941, p.235. As quoted in Kertzer, p.5. Lerner made this statement with reference to the "adulatory allegiance" evoked by Hitler during his preparations for war.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Edelman, p.50.
[61] Ibid.

meanings appear more abstract so that the contradictions appear resolved."[62] He uses the history of American Jews to illustrate "the process through which potentially conflicting identities can appear harmonious by the allocation of different aspects of identity to different domains,"[63] solving the contradiction of national identity and simultaneous identity as a member of an ethnic minority.

It is easy to see how an ambiguous symbol, which holds varied meaning according to group and culture, becomes the vehicle of choice for leaders of rebellions, revolutions, and insurgencies. Because the success of these movements depends on alignment of persons (most easily from disenfranchized and marginalized groups) with the leaders' own images of the world, it is imperative that they select those symbols which will accomplish this while at the same time understanding the cultures to which they appeal. The political language and selected symbology can therefore either "win or maintain public support or acquiescence in the face of other actions that violate moral qualms and typically does so by denying the premises on which such actions are based while retaining traces of the premises."[64]

E. SYNTHESIS OF IMAGE AND REBELLION

Thus, we see that symbols play a vital role in shaping the images of various groups. Through discourse and "ideological persuasion," it is possible to reshape or create an image or "truth". Using symbols and messages that address cultural differences in perception as well as the "weak spots in the images" of others, images can be influenced. Moreover, using symbols and appeals that are favorable to a group's existing

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[62] In undated manuscript, as quoted in Dolgin and Magdoff, p.354.
[63] Ibid., p.354.
[64] Ibid., p.115.

images of the world will help allow the messages to be more easily received. In this way, there are several areas within the realm of rebellion and insurgency to which these principles of image, symbols, ritual and myth can be applied.

1. Legitimization

First and perhaps most importantly, these principles can help to legitimize a group or organization. The use of rituals, as described by Kertzer, can aid in the legitimization of an organization, both internal and outside the subculture.[65] Using references to an historic past as well as myths, as noted by Dolgin and Magdoff, help perpetrate this legitimacy, connecting the present to these pasts, as well as legitimizing the history through its continuity in the present.[66] Appropriating symbols from an adversary, particularly if it is a legitimate symbol of their image of the world, will further contribute to legitimizing an organization. The organization itself and the leaders it creates also constitute a ritual in their existence. Moreover, both the organization's structure and the leader, himself a symbol of organizational unity and the embodiment of the organization's ideology and goals, contribute to this legitimization, both internal and external.

2. Member Unification

Second, heterogeneous subgroups can be unified within an organization, solidifying its membership. This is done through the use of rituals, which create a new, unifying identity or image, minimizing internal differences. Myths, which focus on those images of values and truths favorable to the organization, will also provide a common identity. As Boulding noted, once a common public image is created within an

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[65] Kertzer, p.153.

organization and is then projected outward, the members will, either consciously or not, remake themselves in this image that others hold of them.[67] The power of such group culture and image is strong enough, as he discussed, to cause a member to override his own image of the world. Integrative social power, besides legitimizing, also serves to unify and inspire loyalty. Again, this is done through the creation of an image, specifically, an image of the future. Additionally, the use of ambiguous appeals can appear to resolve any contradiction in a heterogeneous subculture. This strategy of appeals is particularly effective when used by "organizations of the alienated"[68] and the "politically deprived."[69]

3. External Support

External support, or support outside an organization's culture, can be garnered through the use of ambiguous appeals to other "politically deprived" or disenfranchized groups or organizations. Again, using this strategy minimizes differences as well as gives the appearance of little contradiction among the groups. Additionally, by creating a network of supporting organizations, an image of legitimacy is created, and more so if the network includes more "legitimate" organizations. Understanding cultural differences is critical to ensuring that the messages and symbols used in the appeals are favorable to their images of the world as well as address the weak spots in those images.

4. Internal Support

Internal support, or support within the culture yet outside the organization's subculture (i.e., Mexicans outside Chiapas), can be raised through the use of historic

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[66] Dolgin and Magdoff, pp.351-2.
[67] Boulding, pp.71-73.
[68] Edelman, p.185.

symbols, references to common past, and appropriation of symbols which hold some degree of legitimacy with this group. The legitimization of the organization contributes greatly to the amount of internal support, and the use of ambiguous appeals also helps resolve apparent contradictions in much the same way as for unifying heterogeneous subcultures within the organization itself.

5. Recruitment

Recruitment of additional members can also be accomplished through the use of legitimization techniques. By creating an understandable image of the world and achieving a degree of legitimacy, the organization holds great appeal to those from marginalized groups or those confused by a complex world (perhaps resulting from economic or social changes in traditional societies). The sense of subcultural identity and common image of the world fills the vacuum left by those who have become "politically deprived" or further disenfrachized and allows them to remake themselves in a new image that the organization and those outside the organization hold. As Kertzer described, this new collectivity from symbol and ritual helps recruit these particular groups.[70] Of course, this works best with "organizations of the alientated," but as Skocpol and Goodwin noted, these are the groups that most often make up successful revolutions.[71]

6. Challenge to Existing Powers

Finally, the use of appropriated symbols can be an effective tool in challenging the legitimacy of the established institutions of power, while at the same time establishing

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[69] Kertzer, p.181.
[70] Ibid.

its own legitimacy. By appealing to the existing framework of power, and perhaps also using the strategy of ambiguous appeal, the image of reform becomes more legitimate and favorable to the existing images held by those groups supporting the existing power structures. Thus, the achievement of legitimacy becomes critical to not only the organization's image, its external and internal support, and recruitment of its members, but also becomes central to its challenge to the current institutions of power.

[71] Theda Skocpol and Jeff Goodwin, "Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary Third World," *Politics and Society*, v.17, no.4, 1989, pp.490 and 497.

IV. THE SKY DARKENS

A. TARGET AUDIENCES

Now that the symbolic frame for assessing rebellions and insurgency has been established, it will be applied to the Zapatistas in particular. Before examining the specific symbols used by them (in Chapter V), however, this chapter will first address the target audiences and, second, the means of disseminating their messages and symbols to these audiences. Finally, the ends the Zapatistas hope to achieve through the use of these symbols and means will be discussed, looking at how they have attempted to achieve those goals necessary for a successful rebellion: legitimization, member unification, external and internal support, recruitment, and challenges to existing powers.

Target audiences are selected based on their ability to effect, either positively or negatively, the goals of the organization. The second chapter's discussion of the grievances and stratification within the region laid the groundwork for the next discussion of not only the potential target audiences, but also the means and ends used by the Zapatistas to reach their goals of legitimacy, member unification, and support. By exploiting the weak spots in the images of these audiences and targeting them with well-constructed symbolic messages, an organization can sell its image to these groups or subcultures.

There are three main groups that have been targeted by the Zapatistas: the disenfranchised peoples within Chiapas, Mexican society outside of Chiapas, and various activist groups. These groups and their susceptibilities will be briefly discussed, with a breakdown of the different activist groups that were targeted.

1. Disenfranchised of Chiapas

The social and economic conditions in Chiapas created marginalized groups, alienated from the rest of society, who have subsequently become central to the Zapatista rebellion. The diverse mix of *expulsados,*[72] landless peasants, and marginalized Indians were without the security of their traditional communities, who had sent them fleeing to the Lacandón jungles. This group was thus left without identity, which was normally provided by the community. As a result, they became susceptible to issues concerning land rights and ownership, identification with a group and, subsequently, a sense of "belongingness", economic and social justice, and positive government recognition of these people. A vulnerable group, this audience has provided the core membership of the Zapatistas.

2. Mexican Society Outside of Chiapas

Although not marginalized, the Mexican society outside of Chiapas has also been a valuable target audience, providing not only domestic support, but also indirectly influencing the government's actions and reactions. By appealing to a common indigenous heritage and Mexican nationalism, the Zapatistas have attempted to exploit this group's susceptibility to the idea of guilt for past treatment of Indians, pride in the heroes of the Mexican Revolution, nationalism, and, to a lesser degree, anti-U.S. feelings and NAFTA fears. The anti-American susceptibilities were not directly exploited for the obvious reason of alienating their supporters in the United States.

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[72] Meaning "expelled ones", these are the Protestant, other evangelicals, and followers of the Catholic Liberation Theology who were expelled from their communities by the more traditional Catholic citizens. In addition to following different faiths, they usually refused to buy liquor or provide financial contributions for religious festivals, a primary source of income to many *caciques* or strongmen in the communities. The actual expulsions were usually violent and involved public beating, humiliation, and even death before being expelled from the community.

Marcos, as an obvious *ladino* from the Mexican middle class, is an excellent bridge between the two cultures. Through his wit, charm, and charisma, Mexicans of similar background easily identified with him and, as a result, were much more sympathetic to the Zapatistas. Moreover, this sympathy provided valuable support in terms of influencing government response.

3. Social Activists and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

The first of these groups are Indigenous rights organizations. One Native American movement leader affirms that the Zapatistas share a "commonality, affinity, and solidarity"[73] with indigenous rights movements throughout the Americas. The "sweep of American Indian resistance to colonial domination...has been ongoing without real interruption since the first conquistador set foot in this hemisphere more than five hundred years ago."[74] Marcos, in a letter to "the leaders of the indigenous peoples" of the U.S., asked for their support and intercession "before the powerful who govern the [U.S.], to tell them not to support the war against our race, nor the persecution of our ideals."[75] Overall, this group is particularly vulnerable to the ideas of indigenous rights, land issues, autonomy, and, to a lesser degree, traditional spiritual issues and values. These are not dissimilar to the demands of the Zapatistas, who claim to be fighting on behalf of their own indigenous members and as well as "all indigenous people."[76]

The next categories of organizations to which the Zapatistas appeal are the feminist and women's rights groups, both within Mexico as well as outside. The "Laws

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[73] Churchill, in Katzenberger, p.142.
[74] Ibid.
[75] National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, USA, [moonlight@igc.apc.org], "EZLN letter to US indigenous], in Chiapas-l, [chiapas-l@profmexis.dgsca.unam.mx], 20 March 1997.

of Women" (one full chapter in their first official communiqué) and the "Demands of Indigenous Women" (issued as part of their thirty-four demands during peace negotiations with the government) were issued by the Zapatistas in 1994 (see Appendix B for full texts of both documents). They targeted the women within Chiapas (see Figure 4), constrained by traditional cultures, and also appealed to women's rights groups outside the region.

One local historian notes that in Chiapas, women of the Tzeltal, Tzotzil and Tojolabal tribes are especially shy. Rarely do they look foreigners in the eyes, and sometimes they walk away when asked a question.[77] Another observes that the women in Chiapas are doubly discriminated against: "They are oppressed by society for being Indians, and they are oppressed within their communities for being women."[78] This makes much more notable, then, the appearance of many women in leadership positions within the organization.

One such figure is *Comandante* Ramona, the only female member of the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee.[79] Ramona is practically a cult hero in Chiapas after her prominent role in the 1994 peace talks and at the National Indigenous Conference two years later.[80] Much the same a barometer of popularity as in the U.S., "dolls of women fighters sold to tourists are called 'Ramonas'"[81] (see Figure 5).

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[76] EZLN, "Communiqué, February 1, 1994: To 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance," in Ben Clarke and Clifton Ross, eds., *Voice of Fire: Communiqués and Interviews from the Zapatista National Liberation Army*, trans. by Clifton Ross, et.al., New Earth Publications, 1994, p.64.
[77] Andres Oppenheimer, "The Harsh Life of Chiapas Women: They Are Oppressed by Mexican Society and by Men," *The Miami Herald,* 28 March 1994, p.10A.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Blanche Petrich, "Voices from the Masks," in Katzenberger, pp.42-44.
[80] "Ill Rebel Leader Greeted Warmly in Mexico City," *San Jose Mercury News,* 12 October 1996, p.17A.

Figure 4. Plight of the women in Chiapas. From Tótoro Taulis, 181.

Figure 5. "Ramonas" for sale in Chiapas. From Tótoro Taulis, 163.

[81] "A Dying Zapatista Rebel with a Cause: Ramona's Wish To Address Indian Conference," *San Jose Mercury News,* 11 October 1996, p.8A.

Outside of Chaipas, the appeal is for "Mexican women...not to take up arms but that they support in their own contexts the changes proposed in [the Zapatista "Laws of Women" and "Demands of Indigenous Women"] for equality, justice, health, education and housing."[82] There are a number of feminist organizations outside Mexico that have also lent their support to the Zapatistas. One example is the popular U.S. music group, Indigo Girls, which has not only contributed proceeds from their Honor the Earth concert series, but also traveled to Chiapas (their online Website Diary details their visit). All of these feminist groups share common ideals of women's rights and appear to have the same susceptibilities, reframed within the contexts of their own societies: equality, justice, recognition, and participation within their societies. Figure 6 shows a group of Zapatista women in Chiapas, and Figure 7 is a poster distributed by a pro-Zapatista organization in the U.S. appealing to the outrage against rape, allegedly occurring with alarming frequency against women in Chiapas by members of the army.

The last category of activists targeted by the Zapatistas is that of human rights and other social activists. The list includes groups such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch/Americas Watch, the International Human Rights Federation, the Christian Action to Abolish Torture, the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, American Friends Service Committee,[83] and Physicians for Human Rights, to name but a few. In 1996, for example, nearly three thousand activists and community representatives from 42 countries gathered in five different villages in Chiapas, Mexico

[82] EZLN, "Interview, March 7, 1994: Don't Abandon Us!" in Clarke and Ross, p.87.
[83] The AFSC is a Quaker organization of different faiths which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 for their work for social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. See their website at [http://www.afsc.org] for more information.

Figure 6. Zapatista women in Chiapas. From Tótoro Taulis, plate between 82 and 83.

Figure 7. Poster appealing to outrage against rape, targeting feminist activists in particular. From "The Resistant Strains Working Group" World Wide Web page, [http://www.dickshovel.com/zapintro.html].

for the "Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neo-liberalism."[84] Given the documented history in Mexico of widespread torture and ill treatment, due process abuses, and election fraud and related violence (particularly against indigenous, poor, and women),[85] these groups are susceptible to any suspension of human rights, torture, or mistreatment of citizens within a country. By focusing on this aspect, the Zapatistas have also forced the government to restrain their use of force against the rebels as the international community watches.

Other miscellaneous targets, besides the indirect U.S. agents mentioned above, include U.S. senators as well as the general U.S. public. Marcos warns that if the U.S. government helped the Mexican government defeat the Zapatistas, a civil war would erupt, causing many to flee and become displaced, and causing further problems in the U.S.:

> What would happen with immigration to the United States if the conflict was not just in Chiapas? Chiapas has about three million people and Mexico has some ninety million -- you can do the multiplication yourself. So the U.S. government should keep in mind that if there is a civil war in Mexico, it doesn't matter how big or thick the wall along the border is. It doesn't matter what material the wall is made out of. If there is a civil war in Mexico, the wall along the U.S. border will come tumbling down.[86]

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[84] "Acción Zapatista," [http://www.utexas.edu/students/nave/zaps.html, 10 September 1997.

[85] For more information, see Amnesty International's reports on "AI's Concerns Regarding Torture and Ill Treatment in Mexico" (AMR 41/17/97, dated March 1996) and "Overcoming Fear: Human Rights Violations Against Women in Mexico" (AMR 41/09/96, dated March 1996), and the 9 February 1996 report issued by Human Rights Watch/Americas Watch report charging the government with "a pattern of human rights violations" in 1995. Most recently, the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights report, "Concluding observations of the Committee against Torture: Mexico. 11/04/97", finds that "torture has continued to be practiced systematically in Mexico, especially by the judicial police, federal as well as local, and, most recently, by military troops under the pretext of the anti-subversive war"(author's trans.) [http://193.135.156.15/HTML/cat.htm]. Additionally, the Interamerican Human Rights Commission (affiliated with the Organization of American States) issued a confidential report published in *La Jornada*, regarding torture and murder of three Indians in early 1994 and made a series of recommendations, with which the government said it planned to comply.

In yet another letter he asks:

> We address this letter to you [North America] to tell you that the Mexican federal government is using U.S. economic and military support to massacre Chiapas' indigenous people...We would like to know whether the U.S. Congress and the citizens of the United States of North America approved this military and economic aid to combat narco-trafficking or to murder indigenous people in southeastern Mexico.[87]

The common theme is the exploitation of fears of drugs and immigrants spilling over into U.S. borders.

Additionally, audiences are targeted by language. The EZLN communiqués are published and translated on the listservers and Internet in mostly Spanish and English (the majority of the pro-Zapatista NGOs and support groups are in the U.S., Canada and Australia). Additionally, there is a substantial amount translated and then published in French (targeting French-speaking Canadians as well as French citizens -- Mme. Mitterand even visited Chiapas in 1994), German, and Italian.

Target audiences can be subdivided even further based on a wide range of discriminators and possible susceptibilities, as evidenced by Marcos' appeal to Mexicans during their march into the capital city:

> A Mexico for the workers and farmers.
> A Mexico for the indigenous people.
> A Mexico for the unemployed.
> A Mexico for the squatters.
> A Mexico for the housewives.
> A Mexico for the professionals.
> A Mexico for the teachers.
> A Mexico for the students.
> A Mexico for the youth.
> A Mexico for the women.
> A Mexico for the children.
> A Mexico for the elderly.

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[86] Medea Benjamin, "Interview: Subcomandante Marcos," in Katzenberger, p.59.
[87] EZLN, "Communiqué, January 1994: A Message to North America, in Clarke and Ross, p.17.

A Mexico for all the Mexican men and women regardless of their sexual preference.
A Mexico for all the poor of the country, because the poor is the majority of Mexicans due to the acts of the rulers and the powerful.
A Mexico for all the Mexicans.

That is why we ask all the people of Mexico to support us in this cry for justice.

Because our struggle belongs to everyone.[88]

It is hard to imagine any group who might not be included in this universal appeal (and hard as well to not compare it to many campaign platforms seen today in the U.S.!). All of these groups provide support internationally and domestically, as well as serve to give the impression of a large and broad support base (the implications of this will be discussed in the next section). By successfully identifying those groups who might provide support or assistance as well as identifying their susceptibilities, the messages can thus be crafted to affect the image of value, discussed in Chapter II, which can then influence their image of the world and of the Zapatistas.

As Boulding proposed, it is this image which then affects behavior. To turn it in their favor, of course, is the goal of the Zapatistas. Because these target audiences share basic similarities in their images, messages using these images of the world will help reinforce the Zapatistas image that they are trying to sell. In order to be successful, however, they must focus on their targets' susceptibilities while at the same time presenting their struggle as being similar to their own (e.g., indigenous rights, women's equality, successful war on drugs). This is, as was previously stated, the whole art of

[88] Chiaipas95-Lite, [owner-chiapas95-lite@mundo.eco.utexas.edu], "EZLN Communiqué, (Greetings to DF) Sep 2," [chiapas95-lite@mundo.eco.utexas.edu], 14 September 1997.

persuasion: to identify the weak spots in the images of others and pry them apart with well-constructed messages.

B. ZAPATISTA MEANS

The next step, after the target audiences and weaknesses have been identified, is to select the means through which the messages are sent. When identifying the target audiences, it follows that those mediums used by the groups would be the means of choice for the Zapatistas. Subsequently, they appear to use primarily the news media and the Internet for disseminating their messages.

The majority of Mexicans outside Chiapas rely on the news media for their news and information, while the preponderance of social activist groups, located all over the globe, conduct their business and grass roots campaigns over the Internet. The dissemination of the Zapatista messages within Chiapas towards the disenfrachised, on the other hand, is largely accomplished through the pastoral networks established within the region, as well as face-to-face communications in such forms as rallies, marches, graffiti, etc. Due to his skill at writing and public affairs, Marcos has been able to effectively employ these means, thereby reaching audiences both within Mexico and around the world.

1. News Media

Beginning in the first hours of 1994, the Zapatistas concentrated their efforts on media and press releases, avoiding the pro-government media (the government-owned *Televisa*, for example) and favoring the independent press.[89] Their interviews were

[89] According to Petrich, in Katzenberger, pp.41-54, several journalists had been secretly invited by the leaders of the EZLN to a meeting held on 1 February 1994. The purpose was for the Zapatistas "to express

likewise not limited to Mexican newspapers, such as *Proceso*, but included journalists from *The Miami Herald* and *The New York Times*, as well as faxed communiqués to the *Herald Wire Services*, the *Associated Press*, *Reuters* and other major wire services. The importance of publicizing their cause worldwide was not lost on the Zapatistas, and accomplished the purpose of not only garnering support but also served to restrain the Mexican government as the international public watched how they responded, particularly in terms of adherence to human rights.

During July and August of 1995, the EZLN attempted public-opinion polling in 27 US cities (to include San Francisco, Oakland and Berkeley), as well as in 26 other countries ranging from New Zealand to Paraguay to Libya and at 10,000 locations throughout Mexico.[90] The polling questions themselves left no doubt as to the desired responses, with only three possible answers (yes, no, and I don't know) to such questions as "Do you agree with the principal demands of the Mexican people and the EZLN for: land, housing, jobs, food, health, education, culture, information, security, freedom from corruption, defense of the environment, independence, democracy, liberty, justice and peace?"[91] According to the poll's organizers, they were not intended to determine public opinion, but rather to "keep people talking about the issues,"[92] particularly during the cease-fire and slow peace negotiations that were ongoing at the time.

In addition to a proliferation of communiqués issued under the auspices of the EZLN, Marcos himself gave exclusive interviews and a continuous flow of personalized

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their point of view and respond to the thousands of questions that were swirling around them" (see pp.48-49).

[90] Robert Collier, "Zapatistas Try Polling Bay Area, World," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 31 July 1995, p.A9.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

editorials, responding often to individual letters. Not only were they witty and flowery in the typical style of the Spanish language, but these editorials, with his signature postscripts, appealed to all Mexicans and gave them a representative with whom everyone could seemingly identify. Photographs and videos, for the same reasons, have also been used effectively, with seemingly "staged" shots designed to fully maximize any opportunity available.

2. The Internet

The Internet, on the other hand, targets a larger audience than does the news media, which focuses on what appears to be primarily Mexican society.[93] While the interviews and press releases seem to reach the domestic audiences, the Internet is used to reach foreign audiences.[94] This is arguably the greatest advantage of using this particular medium: "the ability to efficiently reach large numbers of individuals who are potential political actors, [which then] plays to the strengths of special interest groups and political action committees."[95] There are a number of websites devoted to Zapatista support, including the EZLN's official site, "Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional," as well as "Acción Zapatista," "Chiapas," "Chiapas Menu," "Zapatismo Communications Net," and even Marcos' children's stories at the "Conversations with Durito" site. Moreover, the sites are not limited only to Canada and the U.S., as can be seen by the origins of these

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[93] This is not to say, however, that the Zapatistas have ignored the foreign press. They continue to fax communiqués, albeit to a lesser extent now, to international news and wire services, although Mexico City's *La Jornado* has continued to be their favorite and most cooperative publication.

[94] As of 1996, about ninety percent of Internet traffic in Mexico was handled through the universities connected to the Red Tecnológica Nacional (RTN), an Internet backbone created in 1994. Commercial providers, though, can now be found in nearly fifty cities in Mexico, and Internet use domestically is expected to grow considerably, especially since the government opened the long-distance market up in early 1997 and an MCI subsidiary subsequently announced it will offer Internet access. From Gary Chapman, "Zapatistas, Other Realities of Mexico on the Internet," *San Jose Mercury News,* 25 November 1996, p.6E.

websites: "Solidarité avec les Communautés Zapatistes du Chiapas" (France), "Mark's Irish Solidarity Page," "EZLN: Tierra y Libertad" (Japanese), "Comite de Solidaridad con Mexico en Holanda" (Holland), "Coordinamento Zapatista per l'Italia" (Italy), and the "Melbourne Page of the Zapatista Solidarity Collective" (Australia) webpages. The pages link to similar "informational" sites, with several linking to other activist groups. They all share the same general symbols, although the EZLN sites (those linking off of the "Acción Zapatista" and "Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional" pages) display both the Mexican flag as well as the colors.

Another aspect of the Internet fully exploited by the Zapatistas and their supporters are the listservs,[96] e-mail bulletin boards, and activist networks. The largest listservs are "Chiapas95," "Chiapas95-Lite," and "Chaipas-l." Still another service is "Mexico Update," an electronic bulletin from MEXPAZ which is collectively produced by NGOs for Peace (CONPAZ). San Francisco-based Institute for Global Communications (IGC) is the U.S. member of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), a coalition of computer networks dedicated specifically to servicing NGOs and activists for environmental preservation, peace, and human rights. It is one of the largest and most active international political groups using the Internet and operate the PeaceNet, EcoNet, ConflictNet, and LaborNet networks. The Zapatistas make full use of IGC/APC, and are thus able to reach over 25,000 activists and organizations in more than 130 countries.[97]

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[95] Charles Swett, "Strategic Assessment: The Internet," [http://www.infowar.com/mil_c4i/SWETT.html-ssi], 8 August 1997.
[96] These are analogous to an e-mail bulletin board to which messages can be posted by the members for all to read.
[97] Swett.

The primary listservs and webpages are maintained by a coalition of support organizations in the U.S. called the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico (NCDM), operating out of Austin, Texas. The Zapatista communiqués are also distributed by the NCDM, although Marcos usually writes them himself.

> Typically [he] would write his voluminous communiqués on a laptop computer, which he carried in a backpack and plugged into the lighter socket of an old pickup truck he used when traveling between remote [locations],...[which would then] continue to flow unimpeded through cyberspace, usually reaching readers in countries as distant as Italy, Germany and Russia faster than they can be published by most Mexican newspapers....[98]

Owing to the fact that the coalition maintains such a large percentage of the information flow on the Internet, which is then copied and reproduced on additional websites, the symbols and messages tend to be consistent. Moreover, depending on the organization targeted, there is added emphasis placed on a particular aspect of the Zapatista message (such as a greater focus on the women's rights situation discussed on the Indigo Girls' World Wide Web page) in order to reinforce common interests.

3. Truth in the Eye of the Beholder

With the emphasis on creating an image of themselves and selling it to the world via the news media and the Internet, sooner or later the disadvantages inherent to both mediums will surface. The primary weakness referred to, of course, is the inability to verify the accuracy of the stories. Given their need for public sympathy, the Zapatistas (and their supporters) many times exaggerated accounts of human rights abuses and attacks supposedly perpetrated by the government in an attempt to bolster their own

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[98] Todd Robberson, "Mexican Rebels Using A High-Tech Weapon; Internet Helps Rally Support," *The Washington Post,* 20 February 1995.

support by discrediting the government. One such example of an attempt to deceive occurred in February 1995:

> When the army began mobilizing...word went out on the Internet that San Cristóbal was surrounded by tanks and armored cars. While it was true that the army presence had increased throughout Chiapas, no tanks were to be found anywhere in the state. One user group [in the U.S.] sent out a report that airborne bombardments were underway in several named mountain villages and urged an international protest. They passed on rebel assertions that women were being raped and children killed. But reporters who visited those areas and interviewed scores of witnesses said they were unable to confirm even one such incident.[99] (See Appendix C for full text).

In fact, it "appears instead that the military has behaved with remarkable restraint by Latin-American standards,"[100] although there are still many valid abuses (noted in previous footnotes). Thus, in order to raise awareness of the government's human rights violations and to raise sympathy, the Zapatistas knowingly disseminated bold and false information on the Internet, usually in the form of their open letters from the EZLN General Command of the Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee.

C. ZAPATISTA ENDS

Using the symbolic frame, the main propaganda goals of the Zapatistas appear to be legitimization, domestic and international support, and member unification. These are accomplished using the concepts outlined in Chapter III, such as the use and appropriation of symbols and ambiguous language. All of these will be discussed, noting which methods appear to be used to accomplish each end.

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[99] Ibid.
[100] Alma Guillermoprieto, "The Unmasking," *The New Yorker*, 13 March 1995, p.46.

1. Legitimization

An effective way for an organization to legitimize itself is to link itself to a historic past, noted by Dolgin and Magdoff,[101] a technique which the Zapatistas have mastered. Their appropriation of historic figures which have potent connotations of a glorious and just past (such as Zapata and the Mexican Revolution hold for Mexican society), have increased their legitimacy and support within the country. The main symbol of the Zapatistas, Emiliano Zapata, represents the defense of Indian rights and land reform, ideas that have been presented as central to the Zapatista agenda. By identifying themselves with such figures and historic events that appeal to most of Mexican society, they have thus been able to carry the Indian cause to non-Indians, appropriating the image of Zapata and his revolution for their own rebellion. As one *mestizo* bystander, wearing a T-shirt with a portrait of Marcos, commented during the Zapatistas' march in Mexico City in September, 1997: "The Zapatistas have always held my attention because they are the defenders of all Indians and of the Mexican people."[102] Figure 8 shows a poster depicting this idea of shared beliefs, asserting that the Zapatista struggle is the struggle of the Mexican people as well.

Kertzer observed[103] that rituals could also be used to legitimize. The Zapatista structure itself is one of the most obvious rituals used for this purpose. The organization, to include the communal decision-making of the Revolutionary Indigenous Clandestine Committee and the uniformed and disciplined army, is based on existing customary

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[101] Dolgin and Magdoff, pp.351-2.
[102] Chiapas95-Lite, [owner-chiapas95-lite@mundo.eco.utexas.edu], "E;AP;EZLN rebels trek unarmed to capital, Sep 12," in Chiapas95-Lite, [chiapas05-lite@mundo.eco.utexas.edu], 13 September 1997.
[103] "Ritual...helps provide legitimacy at the same time as it mystifies actual power relations," in Kertzer, p.153.

Figure 8. Poster from Resistant Strains Working Group appealing to the common ideals of the Zapatistas and the rest of Mexican society. From "The Resistant Strains Working Group" World Wide Web page, [http://www.dickshovel.com/zapintro.html].

ladino structures (the army's ranked hierarchy) as well as traditional Maya structures (communal decision-making by community elders).

De-legitimization of the existing government is yet another technique used by the Zapatistas. The appeals for reform within the existing, legitimate framework of the constitution inferred that the Salinas administration, according to the Constitution, was no longer legitimate by its own definition. Moreover, the Zapatista's emphasis on the history of human rights violations by the government only furthered their claim of a non-credible government. In this context, they framed their appeals to the NGOs:

> We know that the calls of Non-Governmental Organizations have remained neutral in the present conflict...preoccupied...with alleviating the severe conditions in which the civilian population finds itself as well as to push forces toward peace with dignity as our forces and all honest Mexicans desire...For the latter we want to respectfully ask you to engage yourselves in attempting to form this peace zone to prevent Federal troops as well as those of the EZLN from interrupting the physical space of the table of dialogue.[104]

2. Support

Closely tied to legitimization is support. The two aspects that this thesis focuses on are that of the Mexican society outside of Chiapas (that inside Chiapas is discussed under "Member Unification" and "Recruitment") and that outside Mexico.

The Zapatistas have garnered Mexican support through the use of ambiguous language and symbols that minimize differences and highlight commonalties. Coupled with the creation of a likeable human "bridge" between the two subcultures (Zapatistas and Mexican society), they have clinched their domestic support base, already largely dissatisfied with the economy, rising crime rates and drug trafficking, and increasing reports of government corruption. The language of the EZLN's appeals is to their

"Mexican brothers and sisters," emphasizing their common heritage. The struggle of all Mexicans during the Mexican Revolution against what the Zapatistas have presented as the same injustices served to reinforce this idea.

In this way, the Zapatistas have grounded their propaganda on the symbols of the Mexican Revolution. Furthermore, Marcos himself is a reflection of Mexican society (or what they would like to think is a reflection) in his attitude and appearance, appealing to their identification with him and making himself likeable in order to win their support. His language, his wit, and his image are all construed to create a "bridge", bringing a seemingly "foreign" peasant and Indian struggle into the folds of acceptable society.

Appealing to the supposed ideals of that very society and the image that they hold of themselves (e.g., a civil society, democracy, just and equal treatment of all its citizens, and decent standards of living), the Zapatistas then obligate the members of that society to act in accordance with those ideals. Dr. Robert Cialdini discusses this facet of social influence. The desire to be (and to appear) consistent with what an individual has previously committed to, despite later evidence that the commitment was not such a wise decision, is done in order to "keep thoughts and beliefs consistent with what the individual has already done or decided".[105] The trigger that activates this response, the initial commitment, can be a contribution or simple response in favor of an issue. Once this initial "commitment" is made, it then becomes almost mechanical for the individual to continue to make larger "commitments" in order to remain consistent with the individual's original commitment. This consistency-commitment motivation is strong

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[104] EZLN, "Communiqué, February 1, 1994: The Peace Zone," in Clarke and Ross, p.66.
[105] Robert B. Cialdini, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion,* William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1993, p.59.

enough, backed by research data, to compel individuals to do what they ordinarily would not want to do (Cialdini uses many marketing examples as well as that of the Chinese prison-camps during the Korean War[106]). In the same way, then, initially small "commitments" such as purchasing a Marcos T-shirt or attending a pro-Zapatista rally or even responding favorably to a pollster's questions concerning a person's support for the Zapatistas, have drawn many into the subsequent role of continued supporter for the Zapatistas.

Although many of these same techniques apply to raising support outside Mexico, the targets appear to be those who are less part of the social mainstream. These groups tend to be the politically deprived, as was discussed, and the technique is a little different. Because "fact" and "reality" become irrelevant in the sense that every political object and person is an interpretation that reflects an ideology,[107] ambiguous language can easily be employed to those groups most susceptible to change in whatever form most applicable or accessible to their own situations.

As Silvermon noted, this strategy "encourages everyone to read their own preferences into the language,"[108] and in this way is ideal for use on varying target audiences. By using ambiguous appeals ("stop helping the Mexican government", "We call on [Mexicans] to join our movement...[with] sympathy, solidarity and support",

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[106] "The Chinese in the prison-camp program relied heavily on commitment and consistency pressures to gain the desired compliance from prisoners. In order to get initial collaboration ("commitment") from the Americans, they began small, asking them to make statements so mildly anti-American or pro-Communist as to seem inconsequential ('The U.S. is not perfect." "In a Communist country, unemployment is not a problem.'). After making these small statements, however, the men found themselves pushed to submit to related yet more substantive requests, and before long, he found himself a 'collaborator', having given aid to the enemy. This then resulted many times in the man changing his image in order to remain consistent with the deed and the new 'collaborator' label." From Cialdini, pp.69-71.

[107] Edelman, p.10.

[108] As quoted in Edelman, p.50.

"We'd like others from all parts to join us"), the Zapatistas minimize any differences they might have with potential supporters. The range of their recommended actions, too, is just as ambiguous, ranging the whole spectrum of support. The official webpage, for example, lists several ways the reader can show support for the Zapatistas:

> Express your support for the EZLN and its demands, and your outrage at human rights abuses...to Mexican government officials (the email addresses of Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo and ambassadors from various countries are conveniently linked);
>
> Send the EZLN or the indigenous refugee communities letters of support (a link to do this is also provided);
>
> Educate your friends;
>
> Attend a protest rally at the nearest Mexican embassy, consulate, or other appropriate location, or sponsor your own;
>
> Send humanitarian aid to Chiapas (links to organizations are provided);
>
> Raise money for the EZLN or the refugees (examples such as sponsoring a benefit concert, selling Zapatista T-shirts, passing the hat at protests, etc., are listed);
>
> Join a Peace Encampment in Chiapas (links to appropriate sources provided);
>
> Assist with [the EZLN] webpage.[109]

The list of suggestions are purposely diverse, appealing to the whole spectrum of possible supporters, and attempts to make it easy for anyone to make a seemingly inconsequential "initial commitment" (i.e., click on a link to write a few anonymous lines of protest to someone).

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[109] EZLN, "How You Can Help the Struggle," [http://www.ezln.org/help.html], in "Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional,"[http://www.ezln.org], 10 September 1997.

In addition and somewhat related to ambiguous language is the emphasis on commonality and minimization of differences, as was done to attract Mexican audiences. One good example appears in a listserv message directed towards their Italian supporters:

> ...To the rebel peoples of Europe...
>
> Here in Italy and there in Mexico we struggle against racism and separatism. There in Mexico and here in Italy we struggle for a community of freedom and mutual aid. Here and there we clash with a world system that has made a new religion of racism. There and here the rich and powerful are the greatest fanatics of intolerance against those who are different....[110]

Marcos himself strives to emphasize the similarities while glossing over the differences between himself and his supporters. Since many of the groups he appeals to are non-indigenous, one way he accomplishes this is through his image of "a white man leading a rebellion of oppressed dark-skinned natives with whom he has little in common, but whose trust he has won....,"[111] as well as presenting a likeable image with whom people readily identify. Again deferring to common marketing principles, the majority of people will comply with the wishes of someone they know and like. Social scientists have accumulated a body of evidence which points to several attributable factors: physical appearance, similarity in background and interests, and familiarity with the target audience.[112] Thus, Marcos' tactics (whether planned or instinctive) again serve the Zapatista purpose well.

Lastly, another phenomenon of human psychology used to gain international support is that of social proof. This is simply the principle that individuals use what

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[110] Chiapas95-Lite, [owner-chiapas95-lite@mundo.eco.utexas.edu], "EZLN Communiqué to Italians and Europeans in Struggle, Sep 13 (fwd)," in Chiapas95-Lite, [chiapas95-lite@mundo.eco.utexas.edu], 24 September 1997.

[111] Andres Oppenheimer, "A Lawrence of Arabia for the '90s," *The Miami Herald,* 1 August 1994, p.8A.

others decide to be correct behavior as the means for deciding what they believe to be correct.[113] The tendency of people, substantiated by research, is "to see an action as more appropriate when other are doing it."[114] This is clearly demonstrated in the Zapatistas' use of Internet listserves and other electronic message services. By addressing their communiqués to groups all over the world and publishing interactive messages from individuals, the perception is perpetrated that people just like themselves are supporting the Zapatistas, thereby giving social cues to others that such support is "correct behavior."

One example is the message from a woman in Quebec, Canada, asking the "cyber community" where to send money for Zapatista support. According to her message, she is translating Zapatista requests for monetary support into French, and she is being asked by large numbers of people where they should be sending their contributions and in what form of payment.[115] The subtle image suggested, of course, is that all of Canada is eagerly donating money, which should cue readers in other countries to do likewise.

The perception of large, international support continues to draw in supporters, regardless of the fact that almost all the messages are generated out of Austin, Texas. There, the National Commission for Democracy in Mexico supposedly serves as a collection and dissemination station for the proliferation of pro-Zapatista messages (the EZLN communiqués are supposedly faxed to the NCDM from Chiapas). Despite these efforts, however, the Zapatistas in actuality appear to have been "unable to muster broad

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[112] Cialdini, pp.167-207.
[113] Ibid., p.116.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Serena d'Agostino, [darin@marasuca.com], "Support from Quebec," in Chiapas-lite, [chiapas-l@profmexis.sar.net], 12 September 1997.

support for [their list of demands]...including radical changes in Mexican economic policy...since it staged a brief armed uprising in 1994."[116]

3. Member Unification

Lastly, the Zapatistas require member unification and active recruitment. Using many of the previous techniques, such as ambiguous language and emphasis on common traits (oppression, unequal treatment from the government, poverty, exclusion from their traditional communities), a "common enemy" is created, serving to unify the heterogeneous group made up of varying religious faiths and bloodlines (pure Indians versus *mestizo*).

This is also evident in the notable absence of religious symbols and rhetoric, which otherwise might serve to divide the Zapatistas, made up of "Presbyterians, Evangelicals, Jehovah's Witnesses, outcasts from San Juan Chamula,"[117] as well as followers of the Catholic Liberation Theology. In fact, they have adamantly denounced any such affiliations ("Our EZLN has no ties with any Catholic religious authorities nor with authorities of any other creed"[118]).[119]

The Zapatista rituals also serve to unify its members. Through rituals such as their unique decision-making organizational structure, masks, left-handed salutes, and organizational colors, they not only create an image of a legitimate organization and

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[116] Akamoore, [akamoore@aol.com], "Fwd: Associated Press: Rebels Want New Constitution," in Chiapas-lite, [chiapas-l@profmexis.sar.net], 28 August 1997.
[117] Marcos, "Interview, January 1, 1994: *Subcomandante* Marcos: On Origins," in Clarke and Ross, p.49.
[118] EZLN, "Communiqué, January 6, 1994: Dying, But Now to Live," in Clarke and Ross, p.53.
[119] Nonetheless, political groups since 1994 have alleged that Chiapas' Bishop Ruiz has been behind the revolt from its beginnings, even helping to arm it. The bishop and his family have been attacked violently, with two such attacks as late as mid-November 1997. The perpetrators are believed to be from pro-government groups within the region who blame Ruiz for fomenting the uprising, which in turn has destabilized the local economy and has imposed additional hardship on the already destitute in Chiapas.

cause, but also build an identity which binds the heterogeneous members together. Boulding observed the powerful force of common public images within organizations, strong enough to override individuals' images of their world.[120] Furthermore, this new, unifying identity serves to minimize their differences and offers a more understandable image of the world, particularly attracting new members from marginalized groups that had become confused in the changing environment of the region.

The next chapter will address in much greater detail the specific symbols, rituals, and myths that are used by the Zapatistas in the manner described thus far.

From Julia Preston, "Foes of Rebels in Mexico Attack Bishop and His Kin," *The New York Times,* 8 November 1997.

[120] Boulding, pp.71-73.

V. THE CLOUDS FORM

A. ZAPATISTA IMAGES

Using the symbolic frame, this chapter addresses the meaning of the Zapatistas' images, rituals, myths, and culture. Understanding the importance of these is the EZLN's main spokesman, Rafael Sebastian Guillen Vicente, *nom de guerre "Subcomandante Insurgente* Marcos", who has demonstrated an unusual awareness of symbolic presentation and the creation of image.

As a philosophy graduate student whose Masters' thesis focused on the role of education and language in shaping and maintaining dominant ideologies, he drew heavily on such authors as Karl Marx, Louis Althusser, Noam Chomsky, and John Searle for his arguments. It was these influences, perhaps, that helped shape the ideology of the EZLN and, indirectly, their campaign of symbols and words.[121] The then-Foreign Minister José Angel Gurría commented in April 1995 that "Chiapas...is a place where there has not been a shot fired in the last fifteen months... The shootings (in Chiapas) lasted ten days only; since then the war has been a war of ink, of written word, a war on the Internet."[122] The essence, then, of the Zapatista rebellion has been a battle for the mind, a reshaping of image, a war of propaganda.

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[121] See Rafael Sebastian Guillen Vicente [a.k.a. Subcomandante Marcos], "Filosofía y Educación," unpublished thesis, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, 1980, for the actual text. Specifically, Part II deals with General Concepts of an Ideological Theory (Sobre los Conceptos Generales de una Teoría de las Ideologías), including sections on Linguistic Transformation: Motives and Theoretical Development (Linguística Tranformacional: Presupuestos y Desarrollos Teóricos) and Ideology as a "Representation of the Imaginary Relation of Individuals with their Real Conditions of Existence" (La Ideología como "Representación de la Relación Imaginaria de los Individuos con sus condictiones reales de existencia").

The most notable symbols of the Zapatistas are Mexican Revolution hero Emiliano Zapata (from whom they derive their name), their charismatic spokesman, Marcos, black ski masks, the Mexican flag, the colors black and red, and, to a lesser extent, corn and the drawings of José Guadalupe Posada. Death, too, is a constantly recurring theme mentioned in their communiqués, interviews, as well as other written media. These symbols appear on their Webpages, on their banners, in their demonstrations and marches, and on building graffiti, and in their press interviews.

Appearing in such a wide range of mediums, these symbols have meaning for the equally wide range of audiences that are targeted. Their meanings all create an image of the Zapatistas as a legitimate organization fighting for the rights of not only the indigenous, but all oppressed peoples, regardless of sex or ethnicity. To Mexicans outside Chiapas, the "reunification of indigenous consciousness at the margin has not only revitalized national identity, it has infused it with an indigenous consciousness."[123] Mexicans are thus united in their common *indígena* heritage. Carlos Fuentes, comments that

> We have always congratulated ourselves in Mexico on our extraordinary Indian culture which we display in museums and through imposing monuments along our boulevards. We say we are proud of being descendents of that culture. In actual practice, however, we have treated the Indians with more cruelty, perhaps, than Cortéz.[124]

Moreover, this "indigenous consciousness" is closely tied to Mexican nationalism, and Enrique Krauze reflects that

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[122] Chapman, p.6E.
[123] Earle, p.26.
[124] Carlos Fuentes, "Carlos Fuentes on Chiapas," [http://www.indians.org/welker/carlosfu.htm], 2 July 1997.

> Suddenly, with the uprising in Chiapas, many Mexicans felt that history was crashing down on top of them. History as a synonym for ancient arrears, old habits of mind, even of myths deeply rooted among the people. Chiapas seemed to embody the past---latent, unresolved, still vigorously alive. The outbreak looked like an eruption of the lava of history.[125]

The image then, or the "picture of the world the Zapatistas have been seeking to craft,"[126] is one which

> symbolizes injustices against 'forgotten' Mayas; failure of Salinas' efforts to protect rural poor from structural adjustments for NAFTA, about betrayal of the revolutionary and constitutional commitment to agrarian life.[127]

1. Zapata and Ethnicity

Perhaps the most potent symbol of the Zapatistas is that of Emiliano Zapata, Revolutionary War hero and proponent of indigenous land rights. In addition to taking his name for their organization, the Zapatistas use his image on the EZLN's webpage, "Acción Zapatista", and the "Chiapas Menu", as well as carry placards with his picture during marches (See Figures 9, 10, and 11). The image of Zapata has been used to successfully draw upon nationalism as well as the indigenous struggle for rights, and he is described both as Indian and *mestizo* (largely dependent on who is describing him), thus enabling both ethnic groups to identify with him.

This Revolutionary War leader is a symbol that is interpreted in several ways. For non-indigenous Mexicans, he represents an indigenous revolutionary hero who

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[125] Enrique Krauze, *Mexico: Biography of Power, A History of Modern Mexico, 1810-1996*, Trans. by Hank Heifetz, HarperCollins Publishers, 1997, p.780.
[126] Harry Cleaver, "Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas: A Review," [http://www.eco.utexas.edu/faculty/Cleaver/collier.html], 9 June 1997.
[127] Earle, p.26.

Figure 9. Zapatista supporters protesting in Mexico City, carrying Zapata's image on placard. From Tótoro Taulis, 82.

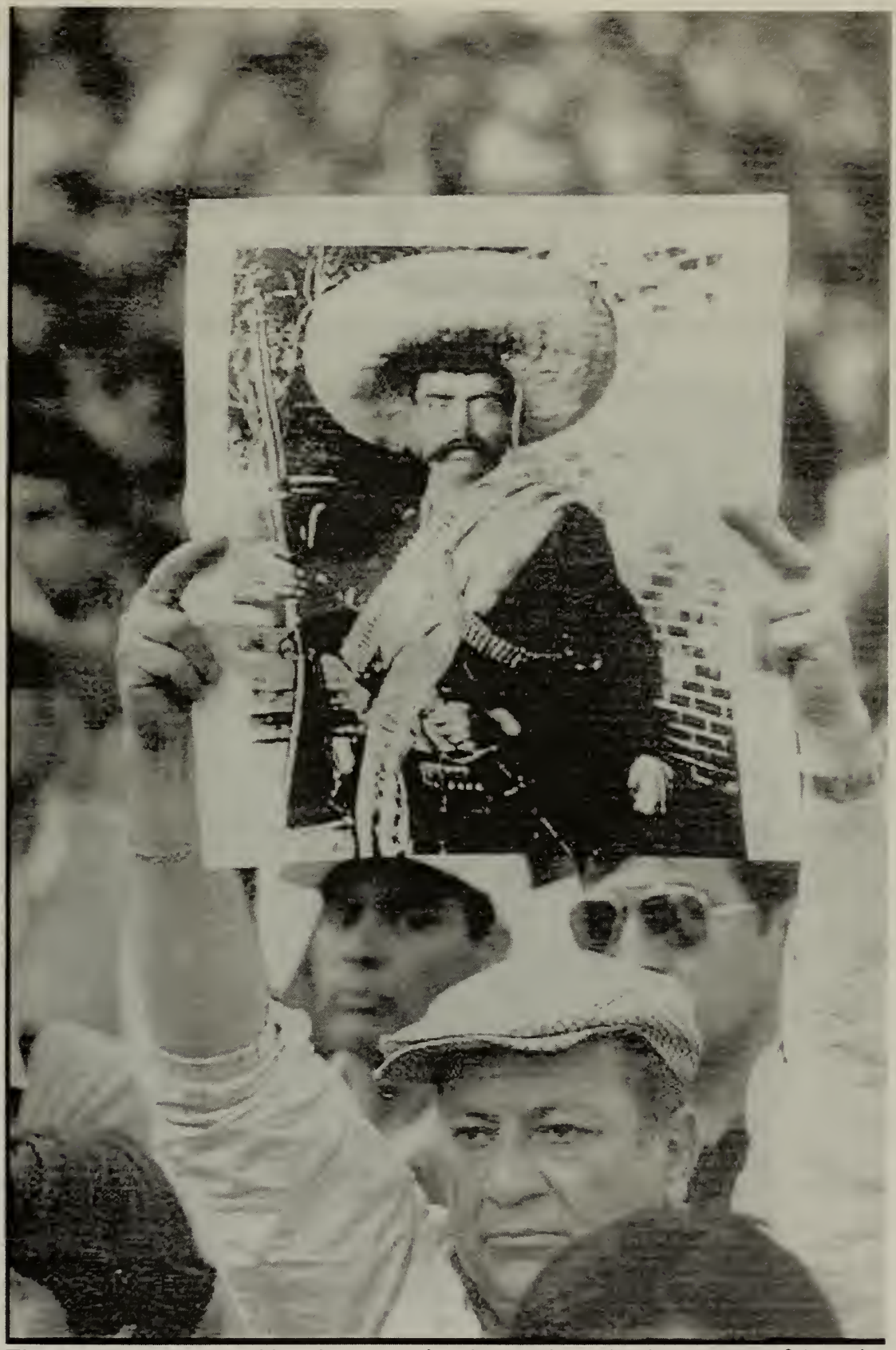

Figure 10. January, 1994, demonstration in Mexico City in support of Zapatistas, carrying picture of Zapata. From Katzenberger, 217.

Figure 11. This button appears on the EZLN page, with the caption "Enough is Enough!"

Figure 12. Even in death, Zapata lives on. From Womack, center plates.

fought for indigenous land rights. To the indigenous, he is one in a chain of *ladino* or *mestizo* champions of indigenous rights throughout history, as well as "one of them;"[128] a "nationalist hero of indigenous rights, a kind of post-revolutionary 'saint', a Bartolomé de las Casas of this century, with a gun."[129] For the Zapatistas, made up of the landless and marginalized (peasants and indigenous alike), he is a symbol of a just revolution and legitimate cause, as well as a reminder of the ultimate betrayal of the government (his murder) (see Figure 12). Collectively, his movement is remembered best by its notable "bias toward indigenous values and consequent respect for the Indians,"[130] and he may even be described politically as a grass roots anarchist. Specifically, his

> unflinching stance on behalf of his people, and the fate he suffered as a result, has converted him into something of an icon among those who feel that Indians have been and continue to be wronged by Mexico's postrevolutionary governments.[131]

In this way, Zapata is a symbol that appeals to all Mexicans, as well as to indigenous people outside of the country. By appealing to the guilt felt by Mexicans over their past treatment of Indians, the Zapatistas exploit this vulnerability. They achieve not only legitimization of their cause through the use of a historically legitimate figure, but also appeal to the vulnerability of indigenous groups searching to legitimize their cause for indigenous rights and recognition.

There is also a supernatural side to the symbol of Zapata. He is variously believed to have escaped, to have been reincarnated, or to remain living on (in memory,

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[128] John Womack,Jr., *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1967, p.7.
[129] Earle, p.27.
[130] Krauze, p.296.
[131] Churchill, in Katzenberger, p.143.

at least) (refer again to Figure 12). In "*La Toma de Ocosingo*" ("The Taking of Ocosingo"), a song created after the occupation of Ocosingo by the Zapatistas to describe their victory over the army ("*Los malditos soldados*" or "the wicked soldiers"), there appear the following verses at the beginning and end, "*Soldados Insurgentes son/empezaron la Revolución./...Rompimos el cerco,/'y cuando salimos, gritamos/...¡Viva Zapata!*" ("They are Insurgent Soldiers/who will begin the Revolution/We have broken through the lines/and when we leave, we shout/...Zapata lives!").[132] This allusion to a reincarnated Zapata again serves as a reminder to Mexicans of the eventual victory of the Zapatista's cause and affords a sense of spirituality to the rebellion, which is otherwise conspicuously absent of religious symbols (due to the religiously diverse members of the Zapatistas themselves).

2. Marcos, Subcomandante of Performance[133]

Just as Zapata was considered the non-Indian (*mestizo)* champion of indigenous rights (as was Fray Bartolomé de las Casas; the *ladino* Galindo, who led the 1869 Chamula uprising; and the current bishop, Samuel Ruiz), so too is Marcos. The most visible member and spokesman of the EZLN, he was described as "a white man, robust but not heavy; he looks not pockmarked; he is likeable, courteous, and educated"[134] (see Figure 13). He is a self-described product of "the gilded upper-middle-class culture of Mexico City;"[135] approximately forty years of age; speaks fluent English, French, and a few indigenous languages; and exudes charm, confidence, sophistication, and a sense of

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[132] Dauno Tótoro Taulis and Emiliano Thibaut, *Zapatistas,* (Santiago, Chile) Libreía Liberarte, 1996, p.33. Translated by author.
[133] Taken from the title of Guillermo Gómez Peña's essay in Katzenberger, pp.89-97.
[134] Krauze, p.782.
[135] Gary H. Gossen, "From Olmecs to Zapatistas: A Once and Future History of Souls," *American Anthropologist*, v.96, no.3, September 1994, p.553.

humor. His image is modern and likeable, hardly that of a "traditional" revolutionary fanatic and his appeal is no surprise.[136] Hence, Marcos becomes for the mostly indigenous Zapatistas a bridge to the outside world, a contemporary *ladino* champion of rural and indigenous causes in the tradition of de las Casas, Galindo, and Zapata.

Worthy of a student of Althusser and a former teacher of graphic design and communications, Marcos is also adept at managing symbolic language and shaping images. Owing to this, he has shaped his own "dazzling image as a masked *mito genial*, his own term for an inspired act of mythmaking."[137] His carefully crafted image is a synthesis of twentieth century symbols, costumes, and props, all designed to evoke a litany of required responses if the Zapatistas are to be successful (see Figures 13 and 14). The constant "bulldog" pipe and sex appeal are reminiscent of both Zapata, who refused to abandon his ever-present cigar even in the thick of battle,[138] and Che Guevara. The Zapata-style bandoleers are loaded with bullets that do not match the AR-15 assault rifle he carries, and the Mao-style cap with three red stars across the front complete the image of, as the *New York Times* christened him, "the first postmodern guerrilla leader"[139] (this may not hold true, perhaps, upon closer examination). His eroticism, just as legendary as Zapata's "way with women," is as crucial to his image. "His soft and sincere voice, and 'beautiful hazel eyes' framed by the black mask, turned him into an icon of forbidden

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[136] Marcos was also a volunteer worker in Sandinista Nicaragua and since 1983 was a member of the Front for National Liberation (FLN). In the early 1980s, the FLN's published aim was to set up a "dictatorship of the proletariat" using a strategy of "initiating the struggle in those places where "irredentist" masses are ready to take up arms, making use of the geographic evaluations duly assessed by our commanders." Irredentism, defined as "a defiance of the center by a group with a strong sense of its own ethnicity and grievances," reigned in Chiapas. Taken from Kreuze, p.784.

[137] Guillermoprieto, "The Unmasking," p.42.

[138] Kreuze, p.283.

[139] As quoted in Peña, in Katzenberger, p.91.

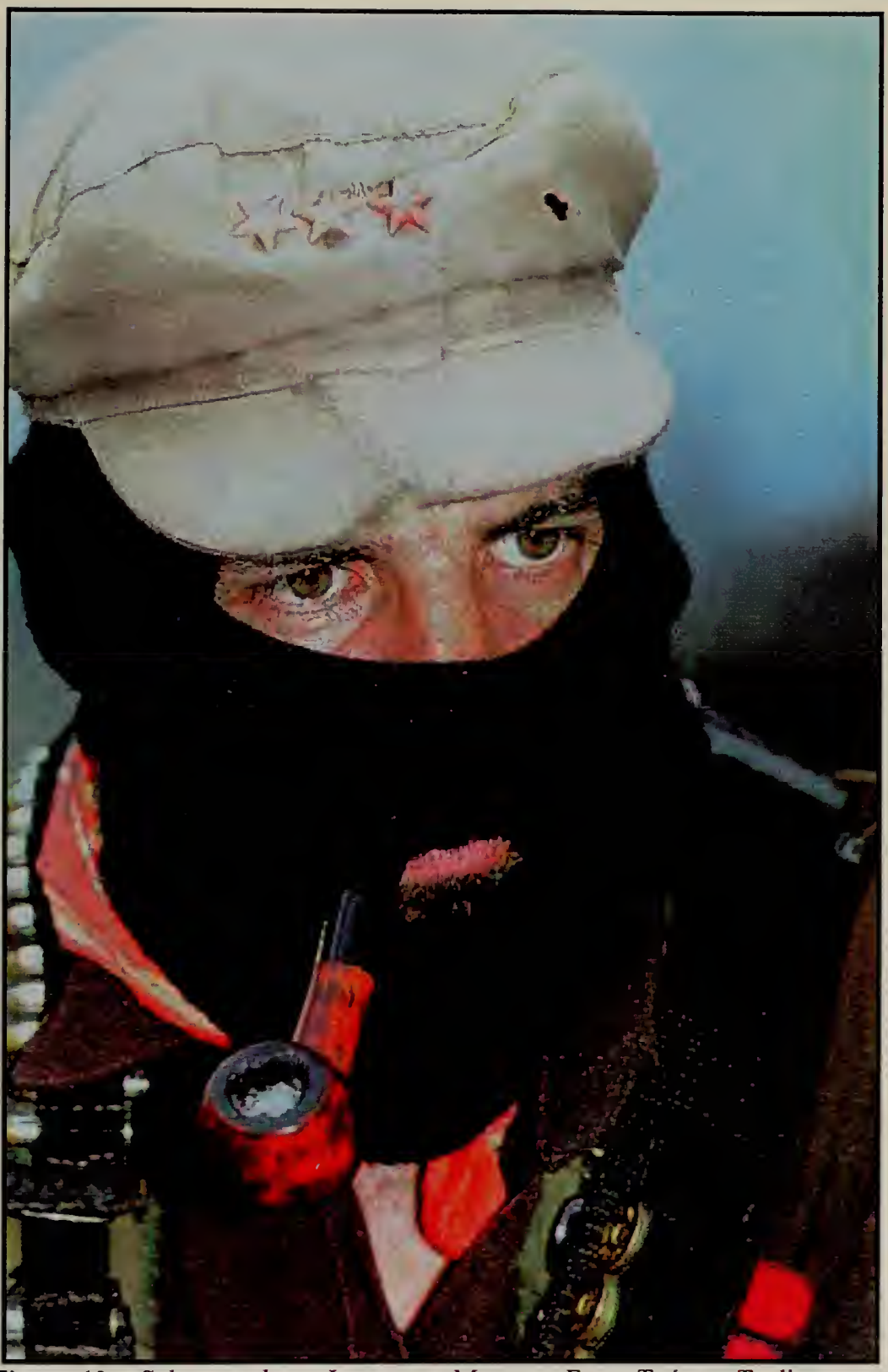

Figure 13. *Subcomandante Insurgente* Marcos. From Toótoro Taulis, center plates between 82 and 83.

Figure 14. Marcos and members of the EZLN in Chiapas. From Tótoro Taulis, center plates between 82 and 83.

sexuality,"[140] and women from all walks of life threw themselves at his feet. A cult following quickly developed, and a torrent of T-shirts, key chains, dolls, posters, and even ski-masked condoms (see Figure 15), soon descended upon Mexico.[141]

Denying his role as Zapatista leader, he asserted instead that he was subordinate to a collective indigenous committee, from which he received his orders. This, coupled with his appropriation of Zapata and other historical symbols, achieves two key ends. First, it gives the impression that the "oldest inhabitants of the continent are directing the rebellion."[142] Second, by "anchoring his struggle in Mexican history,"[143] he extends the appeal of the movement to the non-indigenous Mexicans, and reaches out to values that shape their image of the world. "Right from the beginning, he said that the Zapatistas were 'heirs to the true forgers of our nationality.' All they wanted was that there should be 'democracy, that there should not be inequality,' deliverance as God speaks of it."[144] Even the current goal of regional autonomy is seemingly lifted from the pages of history: "the dream of Zapatista [circa 1910] redemption was to create a mosaic of small autonomous holdings whose owners would be united by a strong sense of community."[145]

3. Masks

Although not taken from history, another readily identifiable symbol associated with the Zapatistas is the black mask used by the EZLN. In one of their communiqués,

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[140] Ibid., p.92.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Krauze, p.785.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid., p.288.

Figure 15. "Say NO to terrorism. Use Marcocondoms against AIDS." (author's trans.) Advertisement which appeared in *Chahuistle*, no.1, a Mexico City weekly magazine. From Katzenberger, 97.

they announced that their use of masks (worn only by the commanders) (refer again to Figure 14) was to act "as a safeguard against *caudillismo,*"[146] "guarding against stardom, that is, to make sure that no one is promoted over others."[147] This is much the same as Laba observes regarding the lack of focus on personality and leaders within the Polish Solidarity movement.[148] Marcos himself, however, seemingly contradicts this through his use of other distinguishing props such as his pipe and cap.

Marcos further describes the mask as an anonymous symbol of their collective leadership, unrelated to the individual wearing it.

> Now you're listening to me because I'm here but elsewhere there are other people like me talking with ski masks on. They call this ski mask "Marcos" here today and tomorrow they'll call it "Pedro" in Magaritas or "Joshua" in Ocasingo or "Alfredo" in Altamirano or whatever they may call it.[149]

The "it" to which he refers is "a collective heart, not a *caudillo*,"[150] using the mask to personify and simplify the concept of collective leadership, as Kertzer noted.[151] In fact, one anthropologist observed that one of the most notable features about the rebellion is that "it is not characterized by personal charisma which is almost invariably found in Mexican politics, governmental as well as rebellious."[152]

The masks, therefore, help perpetrate an image they have crafted of themselves that they hope to convince others to accept. "The only image that you're going to have is

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[146] EZLN, "Communiqué, January 6, 1994: Dying, But Now to Live," in Clarke and Ross, p.53.
[147] Marcos, "Interview, January 1, 1994: Subcomandante Marcos: On Origins," in Clarke and Ross, p.45.
[148] Roman Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity*, Princeton University Press, 1991, p.149.
[149] Marcos, "Interview, January 1, 1994" in Clarke and Ross, pp.47-48.
[150] Ibid., p.48.
[151] Kertzer, p.8.
[152] Leif Korsbaek, "The Indigenous Rebellion," *Indigenous Affairs,* v.1, January/February/March 1994, p.13.

that those revolutionaries here are masked."[153] During an interview with Meada Benjamin, Marcos responds to questions regarding unmasking:

> I will take off my ski mask when Mexican society takes off its own mask, the one it uses to cover up the real Mexico. Then Mexicans would see that the self-image they have been sold is false, that the reality of Mexico is much more terrible than they'd ever imagined. And once they have seen the real Mexico---as we have seen it---they will be more determined to change it.[154]

The masks are also symbols also of the "faceless and voiceless"[155] of Chiapas, and of the Mexican "culture of veils."[156] Returning to the idea of the "true" image held by the Zapatistas, Marcos is certain that "civil society will scarcely wake from the long and lazy dream that 'modernity' foisted on it at the cost of everything and everyone."[157] The use of this symbol is perhaps most useful as a ritual act to unify the Zapatistas themselves.

4. Flags

The flag of the EZLN is not as prominently displayed as the Mexican tricolor (see Figure 16). Either the Mexican flag or its colors are what appears on their numerous websites, publications, and during their activities. The Mexican flag, according to the Zapatistas, symbolizes the fact that the Mexican people are on their side, and the Homeland and flag are both "loved and respected by all the insurgent combatants."[158] They declare that they "are using the colors of red and black on our uniform, symbols of the working people in their struggles and strikes...Our flag carries the letters 'EZLN',

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[153] Ibid.
[154] Benjamin, in Katzenberger, p.70.
[155] EZLN, "Communiqué, February 26, 1994," as quoted in Ronald Nigh, "Zapata Rose in 1994: The Indian Rebellion in Chiapas," *Cultural Survival Quarterly,* Spring 1994, p.12.
[156] Marcos, "Commmuniqué, January 20, 1994: Ski Masks and Other Masks," in Clarke and Ross, p.58.
[157] Ibid., p.59.

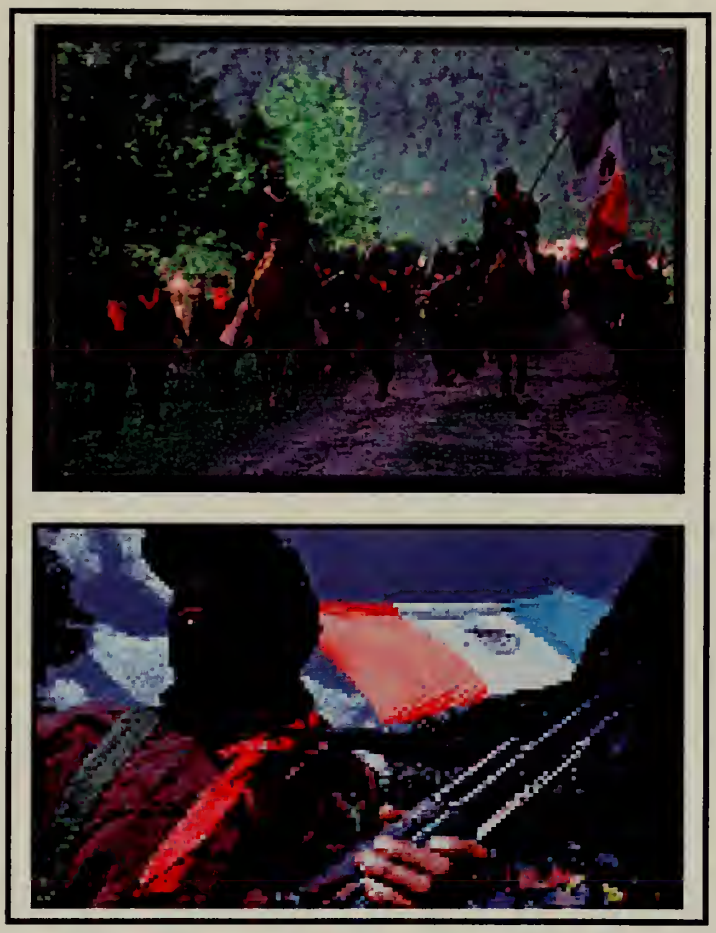

Figure 16. Carrying the tricolor during a movement in Chiapas. Photos from "Chiapas" World Wide Web page, [http://www.grin.net/~dcearley/].

[158] EZLN, "Communiqué, January 2, 1994: Declaration of War of the Zapatista National Liberation Army," in Clarke and Ross, p.36.

...and we will always take this flag into our battles"[159] (see Figure 17). For the ancient Maya, the colors red and black were associated with the directions east (or south, for the highland nations of Mexico) and west.[160] Black is typically associated with death, central in Mexican culture, and the black of "mourning and penitence is also a promise of future resurrection."[161] Red is also thought of as "the color of aggression, vitality, and strength, associated with fire and symbolizing both love and mortal combat."[162] In ancient Mexican art, this color was used sparingly, saved for the illustrating blood, fire, the sun, or leather.[163] Additionally, in Renaissance heraldry, red symbolized "a burning desire for virtue" and a "devout heart, ready to shed its blood for the word of God," while black represented "sorrow, humility, misfortune, and danger." All the suggested meanings of the EZLN colors together support their image, both public and private. The most compelling meaning, though, is that of Mexican nationalism -- a means again of linking the Zapatistas to the legitimate image of the Mexican nation, a part of the Mexican image, not apart. In this way, support can be raised within the country. Referring back to Figure 9, the red and black of the placard of Zapata are also apparent on the EZLN emblem in Figure 11, and the masked EZLN members in Figure14 are also brightly attired in red bandanas and black masks.

5. Corn

Although not as often as Zapata, Marcos, or masks, corn shows up many times in graffiti drawings and artwork of the Zapatistas. To both Mexicans and Maya, corn plays

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[159] Ibid.
[160] Hans Biederman, *Dictionary of Symbolism: Cultural Icons and the Meanings Behind Them,* Meridian Books, 1994, trans. by James Hulbert, pp.74 and 282.
[161] Ibid., p.41.
[162] Ibid., p.281.
[163] Ibid., p.282.

Figure 17. EZLN banner displayed. From "Zapatismo Communication Network" World Wide Web page, [http://www.utexas.edu/students/nave/abzap.html].

an important role and is closely tethered to the concepts of identity for both groups. The fear that corn from the United States would replace domestically produced corn was extended to include fear that the US would erase Mexican identity. Exploiting this fear as well as using it as an identifying symbol of Mexican and Mayan identity are two reasons for the use of this particular symbol. Figures 18 and 19 show two examples in which corn appears as part of the Zapatistas portrayed in the artwork, one was from graffiti on a wall in Chiapas and the other was part of the "Chiapas" website.

6. Posada

Zapata is not the only Revolutionary War symbol used in Zapatista propaganda. José Guadalupe Posada was that war's greatest artist. Known as the precursor of black humor, his drawings of skeleton figures, skulls, and comic verse were used to voice opposition to the regime of Porfirio Díaz. Figure 20 showcases several of his figures, all of which appear on Zapatista or EZLN webpages. His art was a popular tool for informing Mexicans across the country of the "foibles and corruption of the Porfiriato." It is in based on this historical context that his work is used today by the Zapatistas to illustrate what they feel to be the "foibles and corruption" of the Mexican government. The Zapatista skull used on their websites and commonly attributed to Posada, however, is reputed to actually be the work of Manuel Manilla, his teacher.[164]

[164] "Algunas calaveras famosas que se atribuyen a Posada, como la 'calavera zapatista' son en realidad obra de Manilla," trans. by author. Fernando Flores Alvarado, "José Guadalupe Posada: de Posada y Su Legado," [http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Studios/8244/frprinci.htm], 2 August 1997.

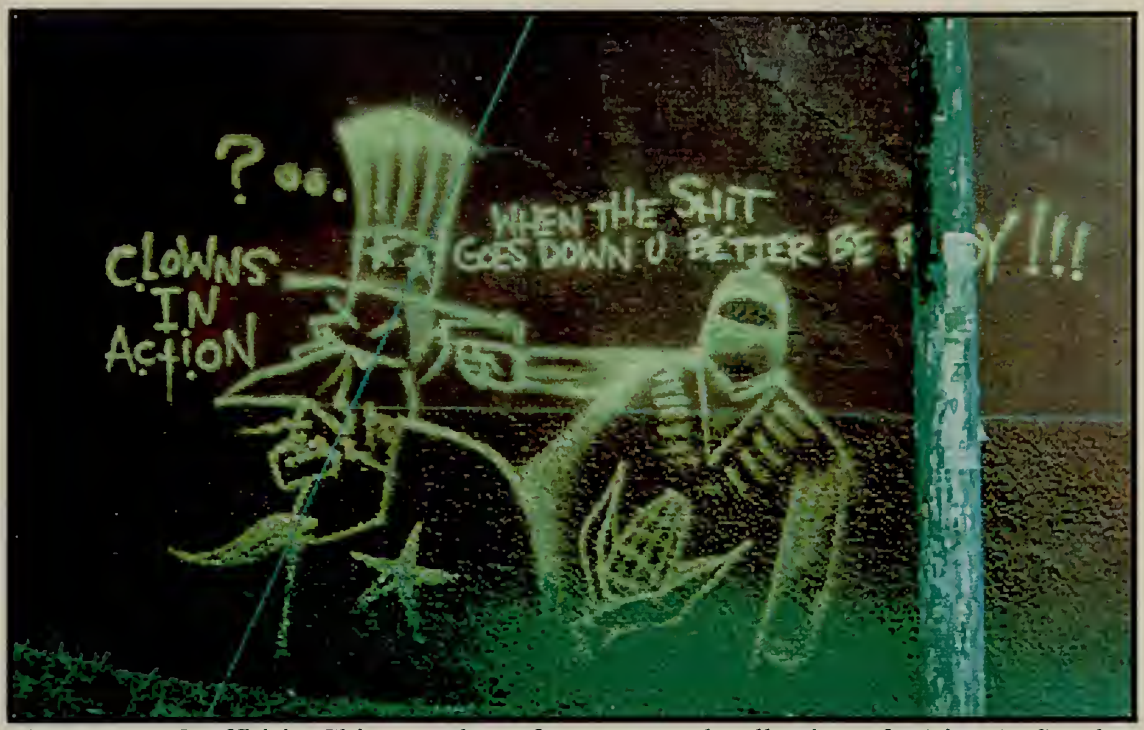

Figure 18. Graffiti in Chiapas. Photo from personal collection of Major A. Sanchez, U.S. Army.

Figure 19. Rendering of zapatista. From Chiapas World Wide Web page, [http://www.grin.net/~dcearley/].

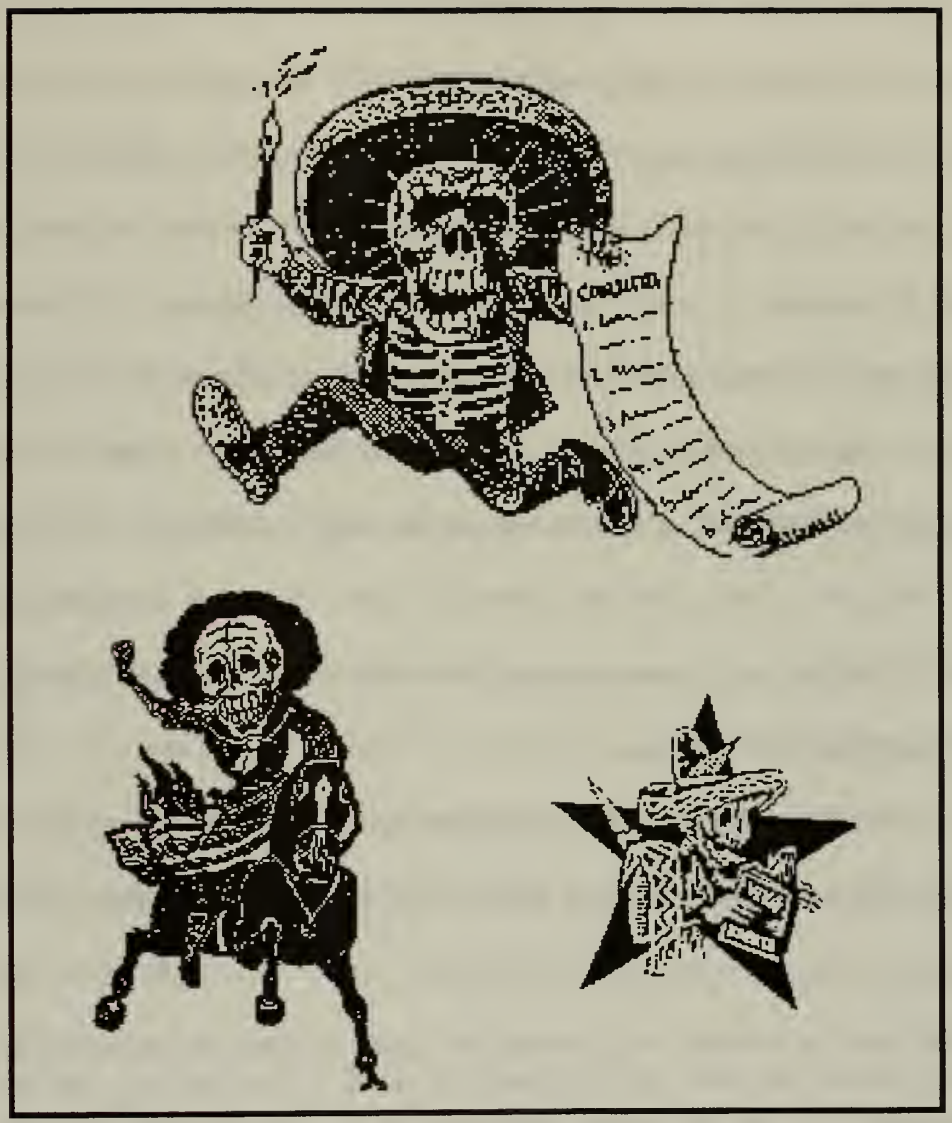

Figure 20. Various Posada figures which appear on EZLN's "Acción Zapatista" World Wide Web page, [http://www.utexas.edu/students/nave/olinks.html].

7. Death in Mexico

Posada's macabre artwork and its popularity are related to a "traditional Mexican reverence for death and the exaltation of martyrdom."[165] Drawing upon this fascination, Zapatista communiqués are liberally sprinkled with references to death and the dead, so much so that Fidel Castro criticized Marcos for "[talking] a lot about war and death,"[166] by which he seemed to target a suicidal non-political aspect of the movement. Discussing the government's failure to officially record the high numbers of indigenous deaths due to sickness and poor health conditions in Chiapas, he writes that "[t]he old men say that the wind, the rain and the sun are speaking in a different way, that with so much poverty, one cannot continue harvesting death, that it is the hour to harvest rebellion."[167] In this way, he successfully synthesizes the symbols of indigenous values, and an implied ancestral consent.

Yet another communiqué of the EZLN reinforces this image of approval from the community elders, the "true guardians of the words of our dead ancestors,"[168] with such passages as:

> The world is another world, reason no longer governs and we true men and women are few and forgotten and death walks upon us, we are despised, we are small, our word is muffled, silence has inhabited our houses for a long time, the time has come to speak for our hearts, for the hearts of others, from the night and from the earth our dead should come, the faceless ones, those who are jungle, who dress with war so their voice will be heard...[169]

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[165] Krauze, p.793.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid., p.787.
[168] EZLN, "Communiqué, 26 February 1994)," trans. by Ronald Nigh, in Ronald Nigh, "Zapata Rose in 1994: The Indian Rebellion in Chiapas," *Cultural Survival Quarterly,* Spring 1994, p.12.
[169] Ibid.

The Zapatistas have said that "they have chosen 'to give death back its meaning',"[170] and their possible martyrdom appears to not only be sanctioned by their own value system, but appeals to Mexicans outside Chiapas. Zapata himself is viewed as an uncorrupted hero and martyr, sacrificed in not only the name of indigenous rights, but justice as well. "Receive our blood, brothers and sisters, so that so much death won't be in vain, so that truth might return to our land,"[171] and "Courage came, bravery came to us from the mouth of our greatest dead, yet now alive again in our dignity which they gave us...we saw that we had to win a dignified death so that everyone would live, one day, with good and with reason,"[172] are only a few examples of the images conjured up to reinforce this idea.

Death, however, is as close as the Zapatistas venture into the realm of religious symbolism, although they do ground their rebellion spiritually. Both the "resurrection" of Zapata and Fray de las Casas, whose "spirit seemed to have slipped across the centuries to take form again in the figure of Don Samuel Ruiz,"[173] allude to a supernatural force strengthening the Zapatistas. Figure 21 depicts Bishop Ruiz, who plays a prominent role in any discussion of the Zapatistas.

In contrast to Zapata's guerrillas, specific religious symbols and causes that might have been used to justify the rebellion are conspicuously absent. Owing to the religiously-persecuted members of the Zapatistas, it makes perfect sense that they would build an "inclusive movement in part by disavowing religious affiliation while affirming

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[170] Krauze, p.793.
[171] EZLN, "Communiqué, February 16, 1994," in Clarke and Ross, p.79.
[172] EZLN, "Communiqué, February 1, 1994," in Clarke and Ross, p.65.

Figure 21. Bishop Samuel Ruiz García of Chaipas. From Tótoro Taulis, 15.

[173] Krauze, p.781.

religious tolerance, epitomizing an ecumenism that has since become more prominent even in Bishop Ruiz's church efforts."[174]

8. Language

Language and the manner in which appeals are framed have also been critical methods of gaining support for the Zapatistas' campaign. The simple, comprehensible, and clear moral basis of their discourse has provided an "antithesis of the language used by the government."[175] By simplifying a complex world, their image then becomes much easier to accept. This ability of Marcos, as well as of other leaders of the EZLN, to clarify and to eloquently articulate the complex world in which people find themselves has had wide appeal, reaching both the indigenous as well as those outside Chiapas.

Owing to his prolific essays, letters, and interviews, Marcos is the most visible as well as the most effective representative (see Figure 22). One journalist describes his style thusly:

> Now swaggering, now full of righteous fury, now impudent and hip, the Marcos of the postscripts is at all times both elusive and intimate, and this seductive knack has allowed him to become a faceless stand-in for all the oppressed, an anonymous vessel for all fantasies from the sexual to the bellicose, a star.[176]

In this way, the Zapatista image is crafted to reach and be readily accepted by a much larger audience than exists in Chiapas.

Humor, too, has contributed to the successful packaging of the Zapatista image, securing for the rebels a huge popularity among the Mexicans. Humor, according to one analyst, is specific to spontaneous rebellion movements and is, usually, "quite absent

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[174] George A. Collier, "Restructuring Ethnicity in Chiapas and the World," *Indigenous Affairs*, no.3, July/August/September 1995, p.26.
[175] Russell, p.39.

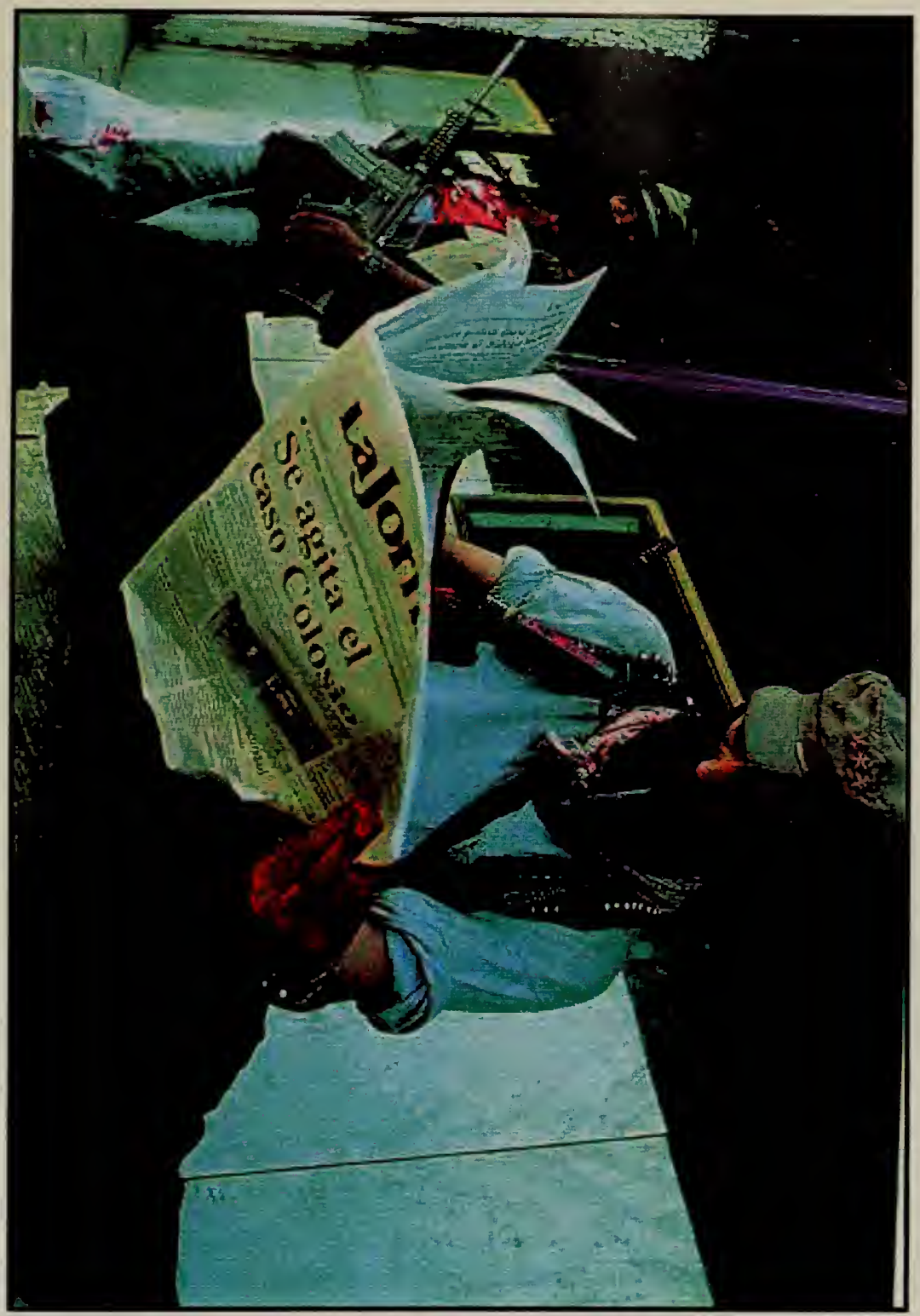

Figure 22. Marcos reading one of his letters to the press. *La Jornada* has been the most cooperative in printing his letters and responses, as well as exclusive interviews. From Tótoro Taulis, center plates between 146 and 147.

[176] Guillermoprieto, "The Unmasking," p.42.

from well-organized uprisings, where we often find a pompous and self-conscious vocabulary which tends to alienate potential sympathizers and supporters."[177]

When asked why he wears a mask, for example, Marcos replied that "the members of the rebellion hide their heads "so that the better looking of them would not have an unfair advantage over the others."[178] After his identity was revealed, he then asked, "So...Is this new *Subcomandante* Marcos [referring to the true identity of "Marcos"] good-looking? Because lately they've been assigning me [alluding to the previous attempts at unveiling the true identity of Marcos] really ugly ones and my feminine correspondence gets ruined."[179] And when the former (and allegedly brutal) Governor of Chiapas, General Absalón Castellanos Domínguez, was tried in *abstentia* at the Zapatista revolutionary court, he was sentenced to "a life-time's manual labor in an indigenous community in Chaipas."[180]

Equally as humorous are Marcos' children's stories about the exploits of *Durito*, the tobacco-stealing beetle. He created these stories in response to drawings from a little girl and he has used the ongoing saga of *Durito* to vocalize to Mexican society his arguments against the evils of neoliberalism (well received in this particular format) (see Figure 23).

The Zapatistas, by using Marcos as a means of identifying with those outside of Chiapas, have in this way been able to secure for themselves "a benevolent support from sectors of the Mexican population which would otherwise neither accept nor admire it, a

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[177] Korsbaek, pp.13-14.
[178] Ibid., p.44.
[179] Guillermoprieto, "The Unmasking," p.44.
[180] Korsbaek, p.14.

Figure 23. *Durito* is a series of children's stories Marcos wrote about a beetle that stole his tobacco. The series is used to illustrate the "evils" of neo-liberalism. From "Conversations with Durito" World Wide Web page, [http://www.ma.utexas.edu/users/guilfoyl/durito.html].

feat which might also prove to be very important in the ensuing discussion in Mexican society."[181] The most important feature, however, of the Zapatista's use of language is its "dexterity at converting military demands into social demands, to move from a position of armed struggle to political opposition."[182]

B. RITUALS AND MYTHS OF THE ZAPATISTAS

Just as several Zapatista symbols have served to unify, rituals too draw groups together. The importance of such rituals is magnified, however, given the heterogeneous composition of the Zapatistas. Myths, which Edelman defined as common beliefs of a large group of people, give meaning to events and actions. There are many rituals and myths used by the Zapatistas, from the seemingly unimportant to the more far-reaching, all of which serve to bind the organization together and reaffirm their images of both themselves and the world.

One of the earliest rituals noted was the fact that the rebels saluted the Mexican flag with their left hand (see Figures 24 and 25). Seeming at first irreverent, it soon took on a different meaning as it came to light that this was done in memory of a revered former leader. Their left-handed comrade, part of the original group that arrived with Marcos in 1983, was killed during the early years in a training accident[183] and is memorialized by this ritual.

To further link their rebellion to the Maya tradition, spiritual ritual was also incorporated, thus increasing legitimization of the organization for the Maya members as well as other indigenous groups. In March of 1994, five shamans representing the major

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[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Vogt, p.34.

Figure 24. Marcos saluting with his left hand in honor of his fallen comrade. From "Fotos de Frita Hartz" World Wide Web page, [http://serpiente.dgsca.unam.mx/jornada/foto/pagina1.html].

Figure 25. EZLN members saluting with their left hands in Chiapas. From The Editorial Collective, ¡Zapatistas! Documents of the New Mexican Revolution, Autonomedia, 1994, p.168.

Maya groups of Chiapas constructed a sacred shrine atop the Temple of the Inscriptions at Palenque, within which Lord Pacal was entombed. Burning incense and candles, they prayed to Lord Pacal for peace. Then they announced that the Fifth Sun, characterized by hunger and disease, had ended and the Sixth Sun had begun, signaling the dawning of an era of hope and unity for the indigenous people.[184]

The rituals just described were real, just as the drama of Zapatismo exists. But, as in all dramas, "there are also actors within it who consciously and unconsciously have taken on roles." Marcos, the self-described *mito genial,* has both shaped and directed this drama. Krauze sums it up best, announcing the cast of players:

> The Indians...are real Indians, but they "represent" all the Indians of Mexico, supposedly "exploited for five hundred years." Samuel Ruiz is a dedicated man with faith in the possibility of justice, but he is also "the new las Casas." The Dominicans and their "catechists" are genuine soldiers of that same faith, but onstage they are the new missionaries who "sting" with their militant consciousness. And there is *Subcomandante Insurgente* Marcos. His commitment to altering the social reality of Chiapas and Mexico is authentic (his democratic convictions less certain). He has been in the jungle with the Indians since 1983. It is a real and some would say admirable life choice. But his specific role as leading man is less clear.[185]

The cast of characters in the Zapatista drama is thus scrolled across the screen. The mythmaker has shaped his image, and must now sell it to the rest of the world. He does this using the props described in this chapter, creating a final product that is hard to resist:

> Marcos has been trying to make history---to compose it---*through a deliberate theatrical use* of the sacred scripture of Mexican history. He portrays himself and his followers as the legitimate heirs of *all* the just wars in the history of Mexico, the struggle against slavery, the War of Independence against Spain led by the Insurgents, the resistance against

[184] Ibid.
[185] Krauze, p.792.

the American invaders…And against his Zapatistas, trailing back through history, he arrays all the standard villains and fuses them together…The centuries are summoned up to compose a mythical drama, a morality play of heroism and redemption, no longer an internationalist Marxist tableau but a huge mural of Mexican history.[186]

[186] Ibid., p.793.

VI. THE RAIN FALLS: CONCLUSION

A. FINAL ANALYSIS

1. Target Audience Selection

The Zapatistas took advantage of the economic and social upheaval (the conditions of which contributed to the formation of such an organization), which in turn created divisions within the region. Using the fine art of persuasion, they simply identified the weak spots in the images held by these displaced and marginalized groups and pried them apart with cleverly crafted symbolic messages. Exploiting their loss of identity and feelings of abandonment by the government, the Zapatistas were there to provide not only a new identity, but also legitimization and hope for a better life. After all, what more had they to lose?

Using symbols, rituals, and myths that represented this new identity and linking their cause to history, they built a unified organization out of several different subgroups. With the support of other groups outside the region and the sense of continuing struggle begun by Zapata and other heroes (and perhaps still guided spiritually by them), the belief that victory will ultimately prevail on their side is carried as a banner of hope. Most importantly in unifying this group, however, is the emphasis on shared history and identity, minimizing their differences (religion, ethnicity) while highlighting their commonalities (economic strife and social/political exclusion). In this way, the EZLN maintains support and members within Chiapas.

Outside of the region, the Zapatistas have provided a better image of the world and society, an image that the scandal-weary and economically depressed Mexicans have

been only too willing to accept. Just as with the poor and indigenous within Chiapas, what did they have to lose by supporting a group promising justice and sensible reform, led by a likeable person with whom they could identify? Cialidini's principle of liking, also known as the "Friendly Thief" principle, is particularly appropriate. Their use of the news media, incorporating personal letter, humor and exclusive interviews serves them particularly well in this endeavor. Equally as successful was the Zapatista appeal to Mexican society's belief (or vanity) in a glorious and righteous history. Perhaps their greatest stroke of brilliance was the appropriation of Emiliano Zapata as a symbol of the equally glorious and righteous (by association) Zapatista cause. In this way, because the Zapatista image of the world coincides with the Mexican's view of what they would like, the image is more readily accepted.

Similarly, the figure of Marcos as a *ladino* sacrificing for the rights of Indians and peasants (as did Zapata) allowed Mexicans to atone for their collective sin of ignoring these people by supporting Marcos and his Zapatistas. With images of the poorly armed (e.g., wooden weapons) Indians fighting for basic rights enjoyed by the rest of Mexican society, this then becomes an extension of Edelman's suggestion that leaders serve to assuage "personal guilt and anxiety by transferring responsibility to another."[187]

Along the same lines of societal sins, the Zapatista appeal to activist groups around the world ignites a flame of righteousness. Groups are outraged at alleged incidents of human rights abuses, violence against women, and the oppression of Indians. The result of targeting these groups, of course, is the perception of wide global support, which in turn escalates the levels of support and participation. Cialidini's principles of

[187] Edelman, p.10.

social proof and commitment/consistency help explain this rapid spread of perceived support, at least on the Internet. Another important effect is the restraint on the government, forced to negotiate rather than subdue the insurgents, all done under the scrutiny of a global audience.

2. Dissemination Means

To best sell their image and cause, thereby gaining legitimacy and support, the Zapatistas have chosen the Internet and the public media as their primary means of spreading their messages based on their target audiences. Because messages are so quickly and widely spread, as well as the demonstrated ease of disseminating exaggerated and unverifiable stories, the Internet has become one of the favorite mediums of the Zapatistas. The press is also a favorite, for its more personal aspects (letters to the editors, photos, credibility as news source) as well as credibility (*The New York Times* is recognized by many to be more legitimate news source than, say, "The Zap Net of Autonomy" website). Additionally, the local news in Mexico City is more effective at reaching the potential target audiences there than the Internet, while the Internet is the means of choice for activists the world over (the exaggerated stories are particularly effective at rousing support from these areas).

3. Overall Results

Overall, their campaign has targeted the three most viable audiences with effective symbols that engender the desired responses. They have achieved a certain level of legitimacy due largely to the emphasis on the existing conditions within the region and the government's failure to remedy the situation. The forgotten and "faceless" voices of Chiapas have brought their issues effectively into the light of day, with a little

help from a masked Marcos, and their rebellion has increased pressures on Mexico's leaders to "continue enacting political and electoral reform, and to take human rights seriously."[188] By "transforming civil society and setting the agenda toward social change"[189] within Mexico, they have also focused attention on similar movements and causes in other countries, although to a lesser extent. This has led to grass roots support in not only Chiapas and Mexico, but from activist groups internationally. In this way, then, their efforts have been successful.

On the other hand, there are several inconsistencies in their messages and actions. The messages and images they have built focus on an organization composed of marginalized citizens, firing bullets rather than words in their struggle for basic rights afforded the rest of the country's citizenry. Despite their appeal for reform within the legal framework of the constitution and negotiations (rather than a violent overthrow of the existing government and its structure), they denounced the 1997 elections. They explained that none of the candidates sufficiently addressed their issues, and showed themselves "to be indifferent toward the considerations of [the Zapatistas]."[190]

Additionally, the Zapatistas emphasize their requests for basic rights and services from the government, while calling much less attention to their creation of autonomous municipalities in the region.[191] As of September 28, 1997, with the creation of a new

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[188] Ronfeldt.

[189] Lorenzo Meyer, as quoted in Esther Schrader, The Revolution Next Door, Chiapas Revolt Transforms Mexico's Political Self-Image, *San Jose Mercury News*, 7 August 1994, p.1A.

[190] Zapatista National Liberation Front, "Political Parties are 'Indifferent' Toward the Demands of Indigenous Peoples: CNI," in "News Summary for June 11-21, 1997," [http://www.peak.org/~joshua/fzln/news970621.html#b], 21 June 1997.

[191] The fourteenth of their thirty-four demands during negotiations demanded that "as indigenous people that we are, we want to be allowed to organize and govern ourselves with autonomy, because we no longer want to be submitted to the will of the national and international elites." From EZLN, "Communiqué, March 1, 1994, The Demands," in Clark and Ross, p.83.

autonomous municipality named "Ernesto 'Che' Guevara," there are nearly 40 operating rebel municipalities in Chiapas. Although the Zapatistas claim their creation of such municipalities and other integrated autonomous zones are based on "national and international treaties regarding autonomy, as well as Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization," the government condemns their creation as further provocation and without legal recognition.[192]

These actions and inconsistencies can erode their public support. This would be the case, particularly if they begin to resort to increasingly violent and offensive acts against non-military government officials or even civilians in an attempt to put themselves on the front pages of the newspapers and into national consciousness. By stepping outside their image of a justified cause that has gained some legitimacy, they would cease to fit the society's image of their Mexican heroes, as well as would erode the "likeability" of their charismatic spokesman, Marcos. Additionally, rumored support from foreign insurgent groups, such as the ETA, will further alienate Mexican civil society. The Zapatistas would cease to be "one of them", becoming instead just another insurgent group.

Recently, they have attempted to jump back into the headlines through peaceful means. They attended the "Second Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neo-liberalism" in Spain,[193] formed a political front for their organization,[194] and

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[192] Zapatista National Liberation Front, "News Summary for September 21-October 20, 1997," [http://www.peak.org/~joshua/fzln/news971020.html#d], in "Zapatista Frente de Liberación Nacional," [http://www.peak.org/~joshua/fzln], 22 October 1997. (Primary sources for articles are stated to be from *La Jornada, Proceso, El Universal, El Excelsior,* independent human rights reports, personal observations, and press stateaments of the Zapatista Front of National Liberation).

[193] Zapatista National Liberation Front, "Second Intercontinental Encounter Begins in Spain, with the Participation of the EZLN," in "News Summary for July 16-28, 1997," [http://www.peak.org/~joshua/fzln/news970728.html#c], 28 June 1997.

conducted a peaceful march into Mexico City. In the capital, they demanded the immediate implementation of the San Andrés Accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture (result of their negotiations in August 1994), and resumption of their dialogues, which several officials and the leader of one political party stated support for continued talks.[195] As Collier succinctly commented, "the PRD victory in the Mexico City mayoralty elections stole center stage from the Zapatistas in Mexican public view...now [they] need to recapture attention center stage, and the march and the demands for institution of the autonomy accords are what they hope will do it."[196]

But, since the talks have yet to resume, their initial demands have not been met, NAFTA continues, and they are not the only headlines in today's newspapers, the question remains of whether they won the war of words. During an interview, Marcos responded to the following: "The spark of your offensive didn't catch fire. It didn't turn into an insurrection. The people didn't put up barricades, rise up in the city." According to him, that was not their expectation, rather they saw "the armed struggle as part of a larger, more complex process, a part which could come to be determinant...its validity is demonstrated by that sudden attention to the indigenous question on the part of the Federal government."[197]

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[194] Zapatista National Liberation Front, "Marcos: Zapatistas Will Come to Mexico City in September for the Founding of the FLZN," in "News Summary for July 29-August 11, 1997," [http://www.peak.org/~joshua/fzln/news970811.html], 11 August 1997.

[195] National Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) president Andrés Manuel López Obrado sent a letter to the marchers were just, and that his party would warmly welcome their presence. Additionally, the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) issued a statement also stating their support and asked the Interior Minister to immediately resume negotiations with the rebels. From Zapatista National Liberation Front, "Immediate Reactions to the March," in "News Summary for September 8-20, 1997," [http://www.peak.org/~joshua/fzln/news970920.html], 20 September 1997.

[196] George Collier, [gcollier@leland.stanford.edu], "RE: Thesis Research," private e-mail message to author, 29 August 1997.

[197] Marcos, "Interview, February 5, 1994, Subcomandante Marcos: On Armed Struggle," in Clark and Ross, p.70.

If, however, they have redefined their definition of success to mean only keeping reform issues at the forefront of society's consciousness, then they have triumphed, at least at the level of society in general. This is evidenced by the current enactment of political and electoral reforms, emphasis on human rights, and setting the agenda toward social change. Thus, the real determinants will be the continuation of these reforms at the lower levels of society, to include the more specific issues of public services and land within Chiapas. Nevertheless, viewing the Zapatista rebellion through the symbolic frame, in terms of the target audiences and means of message dissemination, the Zapatistas were successful and achieved their immediate goals of legitimacy, member unification, and support (even if only tacit). Currently at a crossroads, however, they must now choose a path, be it political or military, both of which will require a new strategy of symbols.

Finally, the importance of selecting appropriate symbols and shaping messages in order to reach target audiences and garner support was best evidenced by the Zapatistas' initial emphasis on their *campesino* (peasant) identity and the common struggle for land rights. After the reaction by the international audiences and the media's focus on the indigenous component of the movement, the Zapatistas then began to more fully embrace the indigenous agenda and played down their "passé rhetoric of socialist revolution."[198] Understanding that member unification of the ethnically diverse groups was critical in the earliest stages of the organization's development, it was logical that the EZLN would avoid ethnic rhetoric due to the potentially divisive effects of such language. After solidifying their membership base, however, the attention generated by the Indian factor

[198] Van Cott, p.74.

persuaded them to change their rhetoric and emphasis. In this way, the incorporation of the Maya of Chiapas, especially marginalized and abused by the government, gave the Zapatistas and their "cause" credibility in the eyes of Mexicans and the global community.

B. APPLICABILITY OF SYMBOLIC FRAME TO OTHER STORMS

The symbolic frame is an effective method for examining revolutions and insurgencies, particularly so in this modern era of technology which makes it easier than ever to create images. Because image is so vital to popular support, symbols play a large role in these movements, and it is critical for the analyst to understand their effects. The issues of legitimacy, member unification and recruitment, popular support, and challenges to existing power structures are not specific only to the Zapatistas. Instead, these issues are central to any other "storm" that might appear on the horizon.

Another lesson from the Zapatista case study that can be applied elsewhere concerns their use of the Internet. They demonstrated that the Internet can be effectively used to pass symbolic messages to a target audience, shaping their own image, as well as raise support (both perceived and actual). The Internet, as noted in one strategic assessment, could be "used offensively as an additional medium in psychological operations campaigns."[199] In these terms, then, the Zapatistas have provided an example worth examining.

Before concluding this thesis, it is necessary to point out again that, while the symbolic frame provides a both useful and valuable perspective when examining movements such as the Zapatistas, it should not be the only frame used. Symbols and

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[199] Swett.

their role are but one facet of any such movement. To use only this perspective would ignore the other critical aspects and motivators that, together with the symbols, provide the analyst with the most complete understanding possible. In the case of the Zapatistas, focusing exclusively on the ethnicity of the rebels would have left out the fundamental economic debates that have impacted so greatly on the situation at hand. Without examining these other areas, critical pieces of information and background would be missed, and the resultant picture would be incomplete.

The storm, of which Marcos spoke, has arrived. The sky darkened and the winds carried in the clouds. Marcos predicted that

> The prophecy is here. When the storm calms, when
> Rain and fire again leave the country in peace,
> The world will no longer be the world but
> Something better.[200]

After placing the events of the Zapataistas' rebellion within a symbolic frame, it is not clear for whom the world will be a better place, and it is not the purpose of this thesis to make such a judgement. It is clear, however, that this type of analysis provides a deeper and more complete understanding of insurgent means and ends, regardless of the moral opinions of the analysts.

[200] Marcos, "Chiapas: the Southeast in Two Winds."

APPENDIX A. ZAPATISTA ORIGINS

This Appendix contains a description of the origins of the Zapatistas. Beginning with the pastoral activities and evangelical missionary work in the 1960s, there were several Maoist guerrilla and peasant organizations begun. These influences, along with the organizational structure they established (particularly the First Indian Congress in 1974), helped set the stage for the rise of the Zapatista organization.

Beginning in 1950, many of the disenfranchised indigenous groups (namely the *expulsados* and other religiously persecuted groups, as well as the economically desperate) fled to the less populated lowlands of the Lacandón jungle to recolonize the land.

Most of these first settlers were Protestants who fled the hostile environment and *caciques* (bosses or strongmen) of Chamula, a major municipality not far from San Cristóbal. "Inspired by their religious convictions, they formed 'cities of God' as suggested by St. Augustine, giving them such biblical names as Jerusalén, Jericó, and Betania."[201] Other Mexicans from the rest of the country soon followed once they heard that land was available simply by squatting and cutting down the jungle. Additionally, illegal Guatemalans (estimated at 100,000) joined these settlers, and also came in large numbers (80,000 more) during the 1980s to flee the violence in their own country. By 1960 there were an estimated 5,000 inhabitants of the lowlands area, largely from the Chol and Lacandón indigenous groups, which reached an estimated 300,000 by 1994.[202]

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[201] MacEoin, p.30.
[202] Russell, pp.7-8.

The Lacandón jungle soon became populated with peoples from varied, yet all marginalized groups, paving the way for future rebellion and unrest --- the "perfect social and cultural context for the slow nurturing of what became the Zapatista movement."[203]

In the early 1960s and 1970s, there was much pastoral activity that has been credited with early influences on the rebellious movements in the region. Lay teachers known as catechists spread their word, influenced by Liberation Theology, to an estimated two hundred localities. They organized base communities and encouraged people to openly articulate economic and social demands in order to help improve their standing in society. Many of these groups helped start the Zapatistas.[204] Neither did this trend cease during the last couple of decades. According to one priest, Loren Riebe, a Los Angeles native who worked for twenty years in Chiapas, the Diocese of Chiapas made a commitment in the mid-1980s to dedicate most of their activity to "a program of empowering and training religious leaders in each of the Indian communities."[205]

Bishop Samuel Ruíz of San Cristóbal de las Casas,[206] who arrived to the region in January of 1960, is accepted as one of the major architects of the movement within Chiapas for indigenous rights as well as a prominent advocate of Liberation Theology. His earlier views that the poor of Chiapas were "the victims of a structural situation of oppression" and that "if we take the gospel option, we have to dismantle the structures of

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[203] MacEoin, p.33.
[204] Ibid., p.32.
[205] Robert Collier, "Sunday Interview: Loren Riebe," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 10 September 1995), p.Z1.
[206] San Cristóbal de las Casas is named after the sixteenth-century Catholic friar, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, who, to show his disapproval of the "misdeeds of the Spaniards, had forbidden his friars to stay or eat at their homes or to give absolution to *comenderos* (those who held indigenous as unpaid workers) or to any Spaniards unwilling to return land or goods they had robed. The friars, he said, should stay in the huts of the indigenous; but at the same time, they should not become a burden on them by eating such expensive foods as beef or chicken." From MacEoin, p.27.

domination"[207] changed little over the years. In his Christmas, 1993, pastoral letter, he responded to criticisms that he was "improperly appealing to public opinion outside of his diocese."[208] His appeals, he explained, were the only weapon he had to denounce the "brutal suppression of civil protests, the still unresolved problems of expulsions of both Catholics and Protestants from Chamula, expulsions now continuing for twenty years, and --- above all --- torture inflicted by some members of the armed forces and other official agencies."[209]

In 1974, the state governor of Chiapas asked Bishop Ruiz to organize an Indigenous Congress to commemorate the birth of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, defender of indigenous rights. According to Collier, there were two purposes of the Congress. First, the Catholic Church wanted to "give voice to the sufferings of the Indians," and second, the government wanted to "create a more populist image after brutally repressing the student movement of the late 1960s."[210] The First Indigenous Congress, held at San Cristóbal de las Casas in October, 1974, was the "first official meeting of Indians not convened for the government to tell Indians what to do,"[211] and included members from various indigenous groups.[212] The most common heard demand: "Give us back the land which they have taken."[213] During the Indigenous Congress, several passages concerning

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[207] Ibid., p.4.
[208] Ibid., p.42.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Collier and Quaratiello, p.61.
[211] Ibid., p.62.
[212] There were representatives from 327 communities, including 587 Tzeltals, 330 Tzotzils, 152 Tojolabals, and 161 Chols. See Collier and Quaratiello, p.62.
[213] MacEoin, p.32.

their demands for land, food, education, and health, are almost identical to those issued by the Zapatistas in their 34-point agenda for negotiation, some twenty years later.[214]

In addition to the pastoral movements beginning in the 1960s, there were other groups attempting to influence the people of Chiapas. Maoist political organizers began arriving in the region in the late 1960s. Two of these groups were the People's Union (*Unión del Pueblo)* and the Popular Politics *(Política Popular).* Adhering to the Maoist notion of "insertion among the masses," these organizers maintained low profiles, worked directly with the peasants, and remained in the region for years.[215]

Teachers also exerted a strong influence during this period, although they initially concentrated on trade unions and higher wages. Later they changed their focus and began organizing the peasantry around "non-educational issues and served as grass-roots intellectuals for the emerging peasant organizations."[216] The Church, losing its own influence in the region, also began changing direction, and became more radicalized during the same period.

All of these influences had a combined impact. As early as 1974, a thousand Indians attacked the village of El Bosque, killing seven landowners, seizing municipal buildings and cattle, and blocking roads. They were finally subdued when the Mexican Army intervened.[217] This trend only escalated, and the 1980s witnessed a proliferation of

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[214] Collier and Quaratiello, pp.63-64.
[215] Neil Harvey, "Rebellion in Chiapas: Rural Reforms, Campesino Radicalism, and the Limits to Salinismo, *Transformation of Rural Mexico,* no.5, Center for US-Mexican Studies, University of California at San Diego, 1994, , pp.30-31.
[216] Russell, p.34.
[217] Ibid.

peasant organizations, many of which were strongly influenced by "ties to political groups outside Chiapas."[218]

One of the major groups was the Communalists of the Municipality of Venustiano Carranza, later taking the name of the Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization (OCEZ), which focused on obtaining land and combating indigenous repression. Another major organization, founded in 1980, was the Emiliano Zapata National Independent Peasant Alliance (ANCIEZ). Members of both of these organizations marched in the 10,000-strong demonstration (the ANCIEZ alone accounted for fully one half of the demonstrators) on October 12, 1992, the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus. They marched instead to honor five hundred years of Indian resistance, and toppled the statue of Diego de Mazariegos, the Spanish conqueror of Chiapas.[219]

By the end of 1990, the peasant organizations were apparently making little headway, although their organization and activities laid the groundwork for the EZLN.[220] According to EZLN Major Marios (whom Collier interviewed), however, the Zapatistas had clearly non-indigenous beginnings. Marcos and five of his idealist compatriots from northern Mexico arrived in Chiapas in November 1983, during the peasant buildup, with the intent to develop a political organization. According to Marios, the "northerners' movement was taken over by the OCEZ and the ANCIEZ, which then split into two factions, one which called for an armed uprising and the other which supported more moderate tactics."[221]

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[218] Ibid., p.34.
[219] Harvey, p.35.
[220] Russell, p.36.
[221] Collier and Quaratiello, p.81.

In early 1993 the ANCIEZ, supporting the armed uprising methods, went underground, and evidence of an armed organization was discovered when two soldiers were killed at San Isidro El Ocotal in March, 1993. Despite a letter from a government official in Las Margaritas reporting guerrilla activity in the area, no action was taken and two more soldiers were killed in May. During the subsequent military investigation, several training camps for urban warfare were discovered.[222] There are several possible reasons why the government did not conduct pre-emptive strikes against the rebels prior to 1994, despite the warning letter, military casualties, and the discovery of the training camps. The Interior Secretary and former Chiapas governor González Garrido responded that

> To spread this false rumor [concerning guerrilla activity in the region] will cause serious damage to the development of the state, since it will block domestic and foreign investment in the agricultural sector. The government of Mexico rejects the possibility of a guerrilla force in this southern Mexican state, or of any other group which is planning an uprising due to the marginalization of the peasants and Indians.[223]

Among the possibilities are (1) a failure of the government to realize how large the movement actually was, (2) a failure of the local government to convey accurate and pertinent information to the national level, and (3) a fear that any attack by the government or acknowledgement of such activity would damage the image Mexico was attempting to portray to the world of a developed country, thereby adversely impacting on the passage of NAFTA through the US Congress.[224]

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[222] Ibid.
[223] *Proceso,* 7 Feb 1994, p.11, printed the statement, which was issued prior to the uprising. See Russell, p.37.
[224] Ibid.

In a 1997 interview in Cambridge, Massachutes, Salinas adamantly denied either any prior knowledge of "the existence of a guerrilla movement of the size and characteristics of the one that appeared in January 1994," or that no action was taken "in order to avoid problems with the NATA negotiations," although he did acknowledge having been informed of the training camp discovery.[225] The former commander of the 7th Military Region in Chiapas, on the other hand, asserts in an interview for *El Universal* that "during the last eight months of 1993 the government of [Salinas] was negotiating with the movement's leaders to get them to stop their actions."[226] According to him, they not only knew of the EZLN's existence, but "tried to solve the problem peacefully, through dialogue."

The lack of government action against the rebels, however, did not by itself lead to the success and recruitment of these organizations. During the first four years of the EZLN, there were only 60 members. Realizing that the only way they would be able to raise "wholehearted support by the local population" was by handing over final decision-making authority to the population itself, the organization thus "accepted community control -- making the Chiapas rebellion unique."[227] The result was the creation of the Clandestine Indian Revolutionary Committee (CCRI), which was composed exclusively of representatives from the Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Chol, and Tojolabal indigenous groups, which also reflects the ethnic makeup of the EZLN itself.[228]

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[225] Salinas de Gortari, Carlos. "Carlos Salinas 'Reforma' Interview," FBIS-LAT-97-056, 29-31 January 1997.
[226] Francisco Arroyo, "General Miguel Angel Godinez Bravo on Character of EZLN Movement,"FBIS-LAT-97-218, 6 August 1997.
[227] Ibid., p.42.
[228] Ibid.

The end result of these economic, social, and political changes was a joining together of two militant groups (the non-Indian revolutionary forces and the Indian organizations)

> with the structure, strategy, military nomenclature, and much of the rhetoric of a Marxist armed movement, but with distinctly Indian features as well: a consensual, community-based method of decisionmaking; a political agenda that contains many of the substantive demands of the nonviolent indigenous movement of Chiapas, as well as its characteristic call for dignity, self-determination and respect for indigenous culture and identity; and a primarily Mayan membership, a significant number of whom speak only indigenous languages.[229]

[229] Van Cott, p.20.

APPENDIX B. REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN'S LAWS AND DEMANDS OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

(These laws were first published in the official organ of the EZLN, El Despertador Mexicano,no. 1, December, 1993. These are taken in entirety from Clarke and Ross, p.39)

In their just fight for the liberation of our people, the EZLN incorporates women into the revolutionary struggle regardless of their race, creed, color or political affiliation, requiring only that they share the demands of the exploited people and that they commit to the laws and regulations of the revolution. In addition, taking into account the situation of the woman worker in Mexico, the revolution supports their just demands for equality and justice in the following Revolutionary Women's Law.

First: Women, regardless of their race, creed, color or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in a way determined by their desire and ability.

Second: Women have the right to work and receive a just salary.

Third: Women have the right to decide the number of children they will have and care for.

Fourth: Women have the right to participate in the affairs of the community and to hold positions of authority if they are freely and democratically elected.

Fifth: Women and their children have the right to primary attention in matters of health and nutrition.

Sixth: Women have the right to education.

Seventh: Women have the right to choose their partner and are not to be forced into marriage.

Eighth: Women shall not be beaten or physically mistreated by their family member or by strangers. Rape and attempted rape will be severely punished.

Ninth: Women will be able to occupy positions of leadership in the organization and to hold military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces.

Tenth: Women will have all the rights and obligations elaborated in the revolutionary laws and regulations.

(The following excerpt is from list of thirty-four demands presented by the Zapatistas to the Mexican government at the negotiating table during the sessions for Peace and Reconciliation in Chiapas in March 1994. It is copied in entirety from Clarke and Ross, p.85)

Twenty-ninth: Demands of Indigenous Women

We, the peasant indigenous women, ask for immediate solutions to our most urgent needs which have never been addressed by the government:

a) Birth clinics with gynecological services for peasant women to receive necessary medical attention,

b) Child care centers for the children in the communities,

c) We ask the government to send sufficient food for the children in all the rural communities such as: milk, corn starch, rice, corn, soy, oil, beans, cheese, eggs, sugar, soup, oatmeal, etc.,

d) That communal kitchens and dining halls be built for the children in the communities with all the necessary facilities,

e) That corn mills and tortilla pressing machines be set up in the communities according to the number of families in each community,

f) That we get livestock projects of chickens, rabbits, lambs, pigs, etc., with technical assistance and veterinary support services,

g) We also ask for bakery projects with ovens and supplies,

h) We want to build artisan workshops with machinery and raw materials,

i) For our craftwork, we seek markets where we can obtain fair prices,

j) That schools be built where women can receive technical training,

k) That there be pre-school and infant care in the rural communities where the children can enjoy themselves and grow up morally and physically healthy,

l) As women we need transportation available to move around as we need, and to transport our supplies and products to make our projects work.

APPENDIX C. FULL TEXT OF EZLN LETTER CLAIMING GOVERNMENT ABUSES

(This newsgroup message was taken from Charles Swett, "Strategic Assessment: The Internet," [http://www.infowar.com/mil_c4i/SWETT.html-ssi], 8 August 1997. The message was posted from Arm the Spirit, [atsQlocust.cic.net], and was sent to the following newsgroups: alt.politics.radical-left, soc.culture.mexican, and soc.right.human on 14 February 1995)

Letter From the EZLN
February 11, 1995
Chiapas, Mexico

To the people of Mexico:
To the national and international press:
To the peoples of the world:

The Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee, General Command of the EZLN, have made a call to all of our brothers and sisters of Mexico to detain this genocidal war that the bad government is waging against us.

The federal government is acting with lies, it is carrying out a dirty war in our villages. Yesterday around noon, 14 helicopters bombed the area around Morelia and Gamucha, as well as shot artillery fire in the area under Zapatista control, thousands of federal soldiers have penetrated into the interior of the jungle, via Monte Libano, Agua Azul, Santa Lucía, La Gamucha Champes, San Agustín, Guadalupe Tepeyac and others. They are surrounding us with death and ugliness. We, the Zapatistas, as troops and civilians, up to this point, have done everything possible to fall back, but now we do not have any other option except to defend ourselves and to defend our villages, thousands of civilians have left their homes.

Brothers and sisters, the government of Ernesto Zedillo is killing us, it is killing children it is attacking women and raping them. We ask the people of Mexico and all the pople of the world to do something to stop this war.

Again we ask you, brothers and sisters, don't leave us alone.

We will act with dignity.

Liberty, Justice, and Democracy.

Fraternally,

The Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee, General Command of the EZLN
(Translated by Cindy Arnold, NCDM volunteer).

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   Monterey, California 93943-5000

4. Superintendent 1
   ATTN: Professor Gordon H. McCormick
   (Code CC/Mc)
   Naval Postgraduate School
   Monterey, California 93943-5000

5. Superintendent 1
   ATTN: Professor Roman Laba
   (Code NS/LA)
   Naval Postgraduate School
   Monterey, California 93943-5000

6. Superintendent 1
   ATTN: Professor Scott Tollefson
   (Code NS/TO)
   Naval Postgraduate School
   Monterey, California 93943-5000

7. The Honorable H. Allen Holmes 1
   Assistant Secretary of Defense for SO/LIC
   Washington, D.C. 20301-2500

8. GEN Schumaker 1
   Commander in Chief
   U.S. Special Operations Command
   MacDill AFB, Florida 33608-6001

9. Commander 1
U.S. Army Special Operations Command
ATTN: J3
Ft. Bragg, North Carolina 28301-5000

10. Commander 1
Naval Special Warfare Command
San Diego, California 92155

11. Commander 1
Air Force Special Operations Command
Hurlburt Field, Florida 32544

12. Commander 1
Joint Special Operations Command
Ft. Bragg, North Carolina 28301-5000

13. The JCS Staff 1
J3 Special Operations Branch
Washington, D.C. 20318-3000

14. The JCS Staff 1
ATTN: LTC Rakosky
J-39/Directorate of Operations (Information Operations)
Room 2C864
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20318-3000

15. The JCS Staff 1
ATTN: LTC Seidl
J3/SOD
Room 1E930
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20318

16. ATTN: LTC Rosack 1
OASD/SOLIC
Room 2E258
2500 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-2500

17. U.S. Army Special Operations Agency 1
ATTN: LTC Ahmed LaBault
P.O. Box 46954
Washington, D.C. 20050-6954

18. Lawrence Gershwin 1
Central Intelligence Agency
NIO/S&T, Room &E47, OHB
Washington, D.C. 20505

19. Kathryn Bovill 1
Central Intelligence Agency
DI/OTI/SIG
Room 3R45
Washington, D.C. 20505

20. COL Borcini 1
Commander
4th Psychological Operations Group (Airborne)
Ft. Bragg, North Carolina 28301-5000

21. Commander 1
ATTN: LTC Kevin Higgins
Special Operations Command - South
Unit 1182
APO AA 34003

22. ATTN: Caryn Hollis 1
DP/DIO/LA
Room 3E200
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-7400

23. COL Glenn Harned 1
DOT-D
USAJFKSWCS/AOJK-PO
Ft. Bragg, North Carolina 28307-5000

24. LTC Romeo Morrisey 1
USAJFKSWCS/AOJK-PO
Ft. Bragg, North Carolina 28307-5000

25. MAJ Allen Sanchez 1
1710 SW 83rd Avenue
Miami, Florida

26. Dr. Larry Black 1
1st Psychological Operations Battalion (Airborne)
AOCP-POG-LC-SSD
Ft. Bragg, North Carolina 28307-5000

27. Commander 1
1st Psychological Operations Battalion (Airborne)
AOCP-POG-LC-SSD (Attn: Ms. Weltz)
Ft. Bragg, North Carolina 28307-5000

28. Library 1
Air War College
Maxwell AFB, Alabama 36112-6428

29. Strategic Studies Group 1
Naval War College
Newport, Rhode Island 02840

30. Jennifer Duncan 5
Center for Terrorism and Irregular Warfare
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, California 93943-5000

31. Library 1
Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013

32. Department of Military Strategy 1
National War College (NWMS)
Ft. Leslie J. McNair
Washington, D.C. 20319-6111

33. US Army Command and General Staff College 1
ATTN: Library
Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas 20319-6111

34. Marquat Memorial Library 1
US Army JFKSWCS
Rm. C287, Bldg. 3915
Ft. Bragg, North Carolina 28307-5000

35. Library 1
Naval War College
Newport, Rhode Island 02840

36. Mitch and Kathleen Mikula 1
2300 Knox Lane
Oakley, California 94561

37. CPT(P) Angela Maria Giordano 2
201 Glenwood Circle #32C
Monterey, California 93940-6772